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W. V. Huntington

Oneonta Memories

AND

SUNDRY PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

OF THE AUTHOR

BY

WILLARD V. HUNTINGTON

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SAN FRANCISCO
THE BANCROFT COMPANY

1891

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MRS. MARY COUSE WHITE, of Meredith,

MRS. AARON FORD,

MRS. POLLY PARISH,

MRS. WILLIAM S. FRITTS,

MRS. ROXEY A. PARISH,

MR. HARVEY BAKER,

S. H. CASE, M. D.,

D. M. CAMPBELL, ESQ.,

J. H. KEYES, ESQ.,

MR. J. R. L. WALLING,

MR. JOHN CUTSHAW, and

MR. SILAS SULLIVAN, now deceased.



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Memory

When Memory, with slow uncertain fingers,
Awakes, anew, the echoes of the Past ;
There are some keys on which her touch long lingers—
Some trembling chords that vibrate to the last.



CHAPTER I.

BEGINNING OF ONEONTA.

THE SITE of the village of Oneonta was, in all probability, first occupied by white people not many years after the close of the war of the American Revolution.

The early settlers little thought they were forming the nucleus of a town which, within one hundred years, would maintain a population greater in extent than could be found at any other given point, within a section of the Empire State, extending from Kingston, on the east, to Cortland, on the west; from Amsterdam on the north, to Binghamton on the south.

Oneonta village is situated upon ground more or less hilly and The Plains a few miles west thereof has often been looked upon as a more natural place for a large town. In a purely physical sense, applied locally, this may be correct, but in considering the respective merits of the two points, in their relationship to the general topography of the country surrounding, a person of good judgment, if expressing an opinion, would decidedly answer in the negative,

for Oneonta is situated more conveniently of access, and to a larger number of people in Otsego and Delaware counties than ever could be The Plains. It is the point most commonly central to the people of the Charlotte, Schenevus and Otego creek valleys, as well as that of the upper Susquehanna and they all come down hill to reach it.

But to return to a brief historical consideration of Oneonta: The first one of the now numerous village streets to be used by man as a thoroughfare, was undoubtedly Main street and for ages, perhaps, before the coming of the Caucasian to our lovely valley, it constituted a popular foot path or trail of the wild and predatory savage who preceded him.

The pomp and pageantry of war were not unknown to Oneonta's leading valley even before the hardy pioneer had succeeded the aboriginal in the occupation of the land, for when the Revolutionary War had reached a mid-way point, its operations caused the passage down the Susquehanna from its source, of one thousand soldiers under General James Clinton, bound for the country of the Six Nations farther west. War had shown its hideous side the preceding year in the burning of Cherry Valley and the massacre of its inhabitants by the Indians, but General Clinton having effected his junction with General Sullivan, the country of the hostiles was so effectually laid waste that the destruction of the Otsego county pioneer settlement was partially

avenged. Then for some years I imagine the presence of man was rarely felt in the dense hemlock woods that then covered the ground upon which now rest the foundations of a thousand homes. I fancy the only sounds there heard were those which pertained either to the warfare of the elements, or to the humble phases of Nature's life.

* * * * *

Recently it was my good fortune to have an interview with an aged lady who was not only born within the township limits of Oneonta, but whose memory extended back to the appearance of the village at the very beginning of this century. I will endeavor to give the substance of her recollections in a picture of Oneonta as it was in

1803.

The obscure little settlement, remote from all prominent highways of travel, comprised simply two thoroughfares in what are now called Main and Chestnut streets, although at that time they could hardly be dignified by the appellation of "streets."

There was, to be sure, a road in those days corresponding nearly with the present location of Maple street, but this road was at that time a little beyond what could properly be denominated the limits of the place.

Chestnut street then consisted of three log houses only; one located on what was afterwards the home-

stead site of my father, and the other two were situated on the flat land near a point opposite the present residence of John Cutshaw. These houses were the sole habitations of man upon this thoroughfare and each domicile was within the limits of a small clearing. Their owners were Daniel White, Anthony White and Zachariah Ward.

Main street could probably claim the first building erected in the settlement, in the small frame-house of Frederick Brown built about the year 1790 on what was afterwards the stone residence lot of the late E. R. Ford, Esq.

Mr. Brown had a considerable area of land cleared and cultivated, running back from the rear of his house—a locality now traversed by some of the finest residence streets in town.

At the other end of the thoroughfare was a public house built of logs by Aaron Brink about the year 1795 and located near the mill-pond.

In close proximity to the latter were a sawmill with carding-mill attached and a grist-mill on the site of the present one.

Between the houses of Brown and Brink were four buildings, three on the west side and one on the east side of the highway.

The first one on the west side thereof from Brown's was the new store of Dietz & Curtis located near where is now the Mrs. Bundy brick block ; the second was a store conducted by Peter Dinniny on

the northwesterly corner of Main and Chestnut streets ; the third was a one-story frame-house on what was afterwards the Doctor Joseph Lindsay lot on the northwesterly corner of Main and Grove streets, while on the south side of the former thoroughfare was a frame schoolhouse near what is now the junction of Main and Broad streets where the lady who gave me this information was receiving tuition as a little girl but seven years of age.

Lastly I must not fail to mention the existence of a house still standing at the westerly base of Barn Hill near the mill-pond and at this time occupied by Nicholas McDonald. At the present day this is probably the oldest structure within the corporation and perhaps the town limits. Its only approximate rivals in point of antiquity are the Doctor Lindsay house and the one-story part of the John Cutshaw house which was formerly the original schoolhouse already referred to and was afterwards removed to its present location.

Nicholas McDonald, accompanied by his sons James and Joseph, was a very early settler. He died about the year 1820, aged about ninety years. His sons evidently had great natural taste for the milling business as will appear in what I have to say later on.

The Susquehanna River at this time had a channel in places entirely different and quite remote from its present bed. Until the great

freshet of August, 1816, it followed the line of the mill ditch of to-day from the present dam to the old dam which latter was located near what is called in modern times The Flume.

Parallel and but a short distance from this old river bed on the west side was a causeway evidently made by man a long time before the advent of the white people. This elevated earthway over the low, wet ground, the early settlers found convenient for a highway and used the same for that purpose until it was washed away by the great flood referred to which diverted the route of Susquehanna's waters toward the base of South Mountain and to its present location.

Then the dam was changed to its site of to-day.

Oneonta's original grist-mill, built by John Van Derwerker about the year 1795, was located in an easterly direction from the present grist-mill. The dam to supply the water power for it was built across the Susquehanna River at a location in an easterly direction, the two being connected by the necessary race and the water having turned the wheel of the mill followed a southerly course until it rejoined the river.

The subsequent history of the Van Derwerker mill I have never been able to ascertain, but it seems to me the natural inference is that it was within the next few years either destroyed by fire or carried away by flood, for five years after its erection we find

another mill of the same kind in operation but a few hundred yards from its site. It is fair to presume that two grist-mills were hardly required in such close proximity to each other.

The name of the individual under whose auspices that portion of the Oneonta mill-race of to-day extending from The Flume to the mill-pond was excavated, is another mystery for which I think, at this late period, we shall never receive any definite solution. I am inclined to think, however, that Joseph McDonald was the man and that the date which saw the completion of this work was close to the last days of the last century.

In 1803, 'Squire James McDonald moved up from The Plains and the same year bought the mill property of his brother Joseph who subsequently went West.

'Squire McDonald also bought a piece of land of eighty acres adjoining the mills and this last purchase included besides the land occupied afterwards by the house where the writer was born, nearly all of what is now Chestnut street near Main. He immediately became the leading citizen of the place and seemed to have a prophetic insight relative to the ultimate importance and size of the little hamlet, for he said that some day it would be a city extending to The Plains.

At this period there was a rude bridge across the Susquehanna a few rods up stream from the present

iron bridge and the highway going south from the village in order to reach this bridge crossed the race a little below the mill and followed down the east bank of that stream to the river.

Then the South Mountain was clad with the primeval hemlock forest and the river flat lands from the mills to The Plains were likewise covered with a similar growth mixed with some hard wood.

Rattlesnakes were common, especially in the vicinity of The Rocks, where one Elihu Ward had acquired a reputation extending far and near as a successful snarer of the reptiles.

In concluding this sketch of those primitive days, I will state that what are now called Main and Chestnut streets were at that time little better than "wood roads," and were used principally by lumbermen for getting logs to the sawmill. So sylvan were these highways in appearance that, according to the statement of an old settler, the forest trees on opposite sides of the main thoroughfare, grew so near each other that the branches of one tree intermingled with those of its neighbor across the way, forming an umbrageous arch for the passerby.



CHAPTER II.

1812

THE LAPSE OF TIME since the year 1803 was not without some changes for the little town. 'Squire McDonald was still the leading citizen, and the place was known far and near as McDonald's Mills, and occasionally as McDonald's Bridge.

About the year 1804 one Schoolcraft erected a small structure for tavern purposes, where now stands the Susquehanna House, on the northeasterly corner of Main and Chestnut streets, this being the hamlet's second hostelry. About the same time Joseph Westcott built a store near where now stands the Free Will Baptist Church, on the corner of Main and Maple streets.

About the year 1808 a road was made to The Plains, corresponding in location with what is now called River street. In the course of carrying on this work, the laborers, in removing some old logs, discovered the remains of a man whom it was thought was a murdered peddler, naturally creating great excitement in the little community.

The present grist-mill was built by 'Squire McDonald about the year 1810, and shortly afterwards he built the house still standing on the north-easterly corner of Main and River streets. He first occupied this house about the year 1812, and either immediately, or shortly afterwards, conducted it as a hotel.

At this time a company of State Militia made the village its headquarters and 'Squire McDonald had been commissioned its Captain, eventually attaining the rank of Major in the service. He commonly drilled his troops at the junction of Main and Chestnut streets.

There was then a small rivulet starting in swampy ground located a little in the rear of where is now the Windsor Hotel, at a place subsequently called The Frog Pond; thence running across Chestnut street and skirting the hill upon which is located the First Baptist Church, its waters eventually disappeared in the swamp below the Doctor Lindsay house. In the winter time, this little water-course, freezing up, was much resorted to by boys and young men as a skating place.

It was about this same period of time that a tannery was erected on the site now occupied by the Windsor Hotel and when excavations for the foundation of the latter building were made, in recent years, traces of the old vats were discovered.

In the year 1812 there was no church edifice in the settlement, the spiritual cravings of the community being administered to by services held in Frederick Brown's barn.

The forests on the adjacent hill slopes were then rapidly disappearing with the influx of new population from the eastern counties and New England.



CHAPTER III.

1823

IF A PERSON had returned to McDonald's Mills —about this time called Milfordville—in 1823 after an absence of nine years, that person would have found the most conspicuous new contribution toward the building up of the place was Angell's Hotel, afterwards the Oneonta House, which existed within the recollection of the writer.

It was built on the northwesterly corner of Main and Chestnut streets by William Angell who had recently united his fortunes with those of the town and within his generation developed into the leading citizen thereof which position he maintained for some years.

Angell's Hotel was a two-story gable-roofed structure with imposing looking columns on the end and side bordering the streets.

The principal corner of the new caravansary was occupied in 1823 by David Fairchild as a storekeeper.

As late as the year 1815, the opposite side of Main street from Angell's was unbuilt upon and its steep slope was covered with saw logs where young boys

and girls resorted in order to secure the pitch by scraping the ends of the logs.

In the year 1823 there had been constructed along the side of this bank a roadway, extending from what is now the foot of Grove street on the one hand to the site now occupied by Mendel Brothers' store on the other. Opposite Angell's Hotel and about ten feet below the top of the bank had been placed a long wooden watering trough close to the "dugway" and where teamsters could water their horses.

A person entering town from the opposite side of the river in 1823, would have crossed by an open bridge flanked by logs on either side leaving a passage-way so narrow that but one wagon could pass over at a time.

On entering the village what is now called River street would have been found a short distance from Main street but a passage-way through the woods, that part of town then being denominated "down in the hemlocks."

Passing the 'Squire McDonald house on the corner, the next structure on the west side of Main street was a wood-colored frame house south of the present location of the railroad track, the next building on the same side of the street being the Lindsay house. The next structure was Angell's Hotel with a long shed for hitching horses beneath,

extending all the way from the hotel down to what is now Grove street.

Turning into Chestnut street and going up on the left hand side one came to a small wood-colored house at the foot of the first hill and the next buildings were the two log houses on the flat already referred to, while a little beyond these near the present residence of John Pardoe was another log house.

Returning on the opposite side of the thoroughfare the first house was a frame structure owned by a man named Newkirk and located on what was afterwards the C. P. Huntington residence lot while on what was later the Solon Huntington residence lot was the log house of Asa Parish.

The next building was a tannery owned by a Mr. Seeber, then followed a wood-colored house and finally the small frame hotel on the northeasterly corner of Chestnut and Main streets.

Turning into and up Main street, the next structures on the left were the house and store owned by Jacob Dietz and located on what is now the Mrs. Cynthia Bundy lot, next came the Frederick Brown house and after that, the store formerly kept by Beers and St. John but then conducted by Eliakim R. Ford,—who moved to town about this time,—located on what is now the Free-Will Baptist church corner of Main and Maple streets.

There were also several houses just across the Oneonta creek including the original Walling house.

Returning along the southerly side of Main street, the first building west of the bridge was perhaps a log house opposite the foot of Maple street ; next came the small unfinished Presbyterian church with rough improvised seats where divine service had been more or less held since 1816 ; the next structure was perhaps the before-mentioned schoolhouse with a frame distillery at the foot of the bank in the rear ; then the wood-colored house of Timothy Sabin located near where now stands the Mendel stone store, behind Mr. Sabin's house there being another distillery at this time I believe, and finally the buildings at the mill-pond.

There was at that time hardly a single painted building of any kind in the whole community.



CHAPTER IV.

1834.

THE ABOVE YEAR was a memorable one in the history of Oneonta (by which name the place was christened on the formation of the present township in 1830) from the fact that it witnessed the completion of the Charlotte Turnpike.

This highly improved public road constituted one section of a great highway, extending from Catskill on the Hudson river, to the southwestern part of the state.

William Angell was a prominent factor in building this turnpike and he experienced considerable trouble the preceding year in securing for the enterprise the requisite width of land along Main street. At that time the southerly frontage of the street was largely owned by Jacob Dietz.

Since 1823 Oneonta had been advancing, but in a very slow manner. Among the additions to her growth were the following buildings: the well-remembered frame house built and occupied by E. R. Ford, on lower Main street, as early as 1825, and his store building in the same vicinity; a house on

the westerly side of Main street, midway between the Lindsay house and where is now the railroad crossing; a one and a half story frame house owned by the wife of Johan Jost Dietz and located where now stands the Central Hotel; the office building of Samuel H. Case, M. D., erected in 1832 and the doctor's house, which was built two years later; the carpenter shop of Wright Stoddard, located on the present site of the Doctor H. A. Hamilton brick house; a carpenter shop and house on the present site of the Windsor Hotel and a house built by Timothy Sabin in 1832, on what was afterwards the Solon Huntington residence lot and in which house the writer was born. At this time there were still standing two log houses on Main street, near the Oneonta creek bridge, while two or three similar structures still remained on Chestnut street.

The distillery under the bank, near the foot of Chestnut street, was then being conducted by Jacob Newkirk.

About this period there were also erected several of the frame stores on the southerly side of Main street and which eventually deteriorated into part and parcel of the old famous rookeries that in after years proved such an eye-sore to people approaching town from over the river.

In an interesting conversation with Doctor S. H. Case, he informed me that the Susquehanna House was built in 1829 as a two-story private residence.

He furthermore stated that his marriage—occurring in 1834—took place in the parlor of the aforesaid house, the same apartment that was a little later occupied by Carleton and R. J. Emmons as a store and which eventually became the bar-room of the hotel. Toward the close of our conversation, the Doctor said that it seemed to him there was more timbered land in the vicinity of Oneonta to-day than was the case when he adopted it as his residence, over sixty years ago.



CHAPTER V.

1840

BETWEEN THE YEARS 1834 and 1840 Oneonta enjoyed a period of uncommon prosperity, following the completion of the Charlotte Turnpike. This may, in an architectural sense applied locally, be termed the stone period, for there is hardly a building in Oneonta to-day, whose walls were constructed all the way up to the roof of stone, but what was either built, or commenced, within this period.

The first of these stone structures was the Fritts Building, erected opposite the Susquehanna House about 1835, and still standing. The second was the Emmons Building, erected about 1838 and which stands next to the Susquehanna House; then followed the stores erected by E. R. Ford, Esq. and Solon Huntington, the former building, which stood upon the southwesterly corner of Main and Broad streets, having been destroyed by fire some years ago: while the latter structure is still standing, it being now the well-known store of the Mendel Brothers.

There was also, within the recollection of many, a small building of stone just east of the Blend

Block and which was occupied by Silas Sullivan in the capacity of postmaster during the Rebellion. I presume this building was erected about the time of the "stone period."

But by far the most expensive and imposing edifice of this material in town was the residence still standing, of the late E. R. Ford, Esq., erected about 1840 and which for two generations was the pride of the village and a conspicuous land-mark of this section of the Susquehanna Valley.

Among the older frame houses of Oneonta, still remaining, is the Fritts residence on Chestnut street, built about the beginning of the period under review.

In the year 1840, R. W. Hopkins conducted the furniture business and a cabinet-shop where now stands the Windsor Hotel and Timothy Sabin carried on the general merchandise business at the foot of Chestnut street, while E. R. Ford, Esq., was about to move into his new stone store.

Somewhat prior to 1840, Academy street from Chestnut and Grove street from Main were opened to a junction with each other and the Academy street portion of the highway so constituted bore the rural and significant appellation of Milk street, while the Grove street portion was called Church street.

The public school was then located on the latter thoroughfare while the Baptists had erected for themselves a church near by and the same location

has remained thus consecrated by them down to the present day.

My father and mother adopted Oneonta as their home in 1840, the same year they were married and the lot upon which their first residence together was located is the same which contained their last earthly home together—the same which witnessed their separation with the death of my father after a union of fifty years.

I trust the old ground may remain in our possession for many years to come.



CHAPTER VI.

1849

THE PRECEDING NINE years were not marked by any great changes in the physical, commercial or social importance of Oneonta.

In a religious sense there was perhaps some strengthening, for the Methodists had erected their first house of worship within the limits of the village and like the Baptists and Presbyterians were now enjoying regular Sunday service.

The first church building of the Methodists in Oneonta village, as still many remember, was located a little back of the brow of the hill that is situated in the rear of their present brick edifice and likewise faced Chestnut street with its west side on a parallel line with Church street.

Each of the four corners of the tower of the old church building was surmounted by a sharp-pointed ornament of wood, shaped like a pyramid, whose sides in rising from the base receded but very slightly from the perpendicular.

At the same time while the churches were showing more vigor, Oneonta continued to maintain the reputation it had borne from its infancy of being

the resort of an unduly large vicious element for a place of the size.

This stigma was not owing to the depravity of any large class residing in the village so much as it was applicable to the Goths and Vandals who now and then swarmed into town from the outlying country with the oft-recurring determination to capture "Klipknocky."

Among the more noted "terrors" were several brothers named Murphy, descendants of the famous ancestor Timothy who, before settling in this vicinity, had won distinction as one of Morgan's Riflemen of the Revolutionary War and as a daring Indian fighter as well.

One of this notorious family received well-merited punishment at the hands of a relative of the writer's on an occasion where the former had started out to terrorize the town.

In connection with the quarrelsome reputation of the Murphys, I am reminded of the following incident narrated me by D. M. Campbell, Esq., who witnessed the occurrence.

It was in the year 1847, and the circus of Rivers and Darius was exhibiting on the lot where is now located the residence of Meigs Case, M. D. In the course of the performance, the clown had reached a point where, in the portrayal of some humorous incident, it was necessary for him to prostrate himself and counterfeit the appearance of one dead.

This he did to the enthusiasm of the audience, but in the midst of the merriment and before he had left his recumbent position, one of the Murphys who was present with his kinsmen concluded to supplement the humor of the occasion by taking an active part in the proceedings himself, so pulling up a small tuft of grass he threw it with more or less soil attached into the clown's face.

The latter immediately arose, located his man and awaited a more suitable opportunity for retaliation.

At the conclusion of the performance, the clown called together some of the circusmen and, arming themselves with clubs, they started forth in quest of the aggressor.

Having reached a point on Main street at the foot of the Baptist church hill they found one of the Murphys reclining under a wagon by the roadside. Several of the circusmen immediately made a terrible onslaught and unmercifully belabored the man while the other showmen discovering another Murphy near by, chased him over the high, perpendicular bank below the office of the late General Burnside.

In the year 1842, upon application of certain freeholders, Main street from River to what since became the south line of the railroad crossing, was straightened and moved westward to a line near if not on its present location, necessitating the filling in of much swampy ground.

In or about the same year, the first board sidewalk along the westerly side of lower Main street was laid by Harvey Baker from River street to Grove street.

Another improvement of this period was the opening up of Church street to a point perhaps fifteen rods beyond High street, while the latter was commenced and extended toward West street at the same time.

In 1849 my uncle, C. P. Huntington, having been associated with my father for several years in the general merchandise business at Oneonta, concluded to locate in the new Eldorado that was then attracting the attention of the whole world. A number of the young men of town left simultaneously with the same destination in view.

At this time Oneonta's most serious drawback and, in fact, that of the whole section of the State surrounding was the lack of adequate means of communication with the outside world, but the people were now approaching the end of their lethargy, and awakening to a full realization of their isolation.

Already the opening hours of a new dispensation "were breathing faint and low" and although her fondest hopes for a period of many disappointing years failed to reach their fruition, the little village was on the right track and, ultimately, was enabled to attain her long deferred and remarkable prosperity.

CHAPTER VII.

1860

THE LEADING PUBLIC improvement in Oneonta, for a little over a decade, was the opening up of Dietz street (which for many years commonly bore the sobriquet of "Shanghai") supplemented by the erection of many houses thereon.

The village had undoubtedly received a quickening impulse through the favorable outlook for its proposed railroad, although the latter was subjected to many unexpected, vexatious and prolonged delays. Still, the enterprising and far-seeing capitalists, Ford and Goodyear had faith enough to put large sums of money in the enterprise and the people had faith in the two men.

In 1853 Oneonta's first permanent newspaper was founded in the *Herald*, with whose inception and early history the name of L. P. Carpenter will always be prominently associated.

In 1857 the three churches of the village had received an addition to their number through the faith, enterprise and zeal of the Free Will Baptists.

To the community at large, however, the railroad

question was always the subject of paramount interest in the discussions and alternately arousing the hopes and fears of the people. So was it to continue for some years more until the first faint distant notes of the locomotive sent glad tidings of a new era down the valley of the Susquehanna.



1860

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST SHADOW.

I WAS BORN at Oneonta on the 21st day of July, 1856.

My recollection extends back, perhaps, to the Autumn of 1859, at which time I think I saw our hired men milking cows at the foot of the orchard hill, but of this I am not positive.

The 10th of April, 1860, was a sad day in our household and with that period my early recollections cease to be obscure and thenceforward are more or less prominent and distinct.

Upon that last mentioned date, Death entered my father's family for the third time in its history, in this instance Howard, my oldest brother, being the victim.

He was sixteen years old when he died and although my remembrance of him is but slight, I know from many reports that he was an uncommonly exemplary boy. Quiet and unassuming in his tastes, ever ready to do a favor or kindness to any one, it is not too much to say that Howard was well liked by all who knew him.

He was of a meditative and religious cast of mind and when very young would often stand and marvel at the mighty mysteries of God's handiwork, as indicated by the stars of heaven.

The Evening Star seemed to carry with it a peculiar interest to Howard's mind and for many minutes at a time would he stand and gaze at it through the front dining-room window of our former house.

I have heard my mother say that sometimes when she is looking at this star, it is with a feeling that she is in the presence of my brother who died so long ago.

The morning that Howard's spirit took its flight to another world, the summons came with the earliest indications of the dawn and the silence of the room seemed more pronounced owing to the solitary notes of a robin just outside the window, announcing the advent of another and to the dying boy a greater day. How natural is it then even at this late period, that the early morning notes of the robin should carry with them so mournful a significance to our mother.

I remember seeing Howard's remains in the coffin, as it rested on two supports in our old parlor and near the front door. I was not old enough to appreciate the dread import of that occasion, but I know I was impressed by the awful mystery surrounding that quiet form which had never been

animated by an impulse toward his little brother that breathed aught but affection.

Then came the funeral, but of this I remember nothing. I only know that I passed the day at the residence of the late E. R. Ford, Esq. and was duly impressed by the appearance of an open fire-place, something I had never seen before.



1860

CHAPTER IX.

THE McCRANEY CASE.

I REMEMBER, on the morning of May 10, 1860, that the mysterious death of Huldah Ann McCraney, who had just passed away, at the age of seventeen years, was the topic of conversation in our family. I presume that this was the case in the family of every resident of our then secluded little village.

Murder most foul, cold blooded and atrocious, had evidently been committed in our midst and suspicion, with straight and undeviating finger, was pointing to but one person as the perpetrator of the awful deed; that person a woman and stepmother to the victim; that victim a young and inoffensive girl.

I remember what a thrill of excitement passed through the town, as accumulating evidence began to throw a deeper and darker shadow across the threshold of that house than even Death itself could make.

Within its clouded precincts, calm and unperturbed moved the being toward whom the popular wrath was tending, apparently unconscious of her

peril, and if aware, indifferent still to all. Her face maintained its accustomed impassiveness, and her fathomless eyes preserved unchanged their look inscrutable.

* * * * *

In the year 1858 there came to our village a Mrs. Baker, accompanied by but one person, her daughter and only child Lucia. Mrs. Baker was a woman of perhaps more than ordinary intelligence and Lucia a girl of about fifteen summers, was bright of mind and prepossessing in appearance. They immediately took rooms at the Oneonta House, and were well received by the better grades of village society.

John McCraney, a man employed by my father, being a widower with two daughters, became greatly interested in Mrs. Baker and finally married her. The recent widow and her child then took up their abode with him at his house, still standing, on Dietz street. In about a year thereafter came the tragedy with which old Oneonta people are familiar.

On Sunday morning, April 29, 1860, Huldah Ann McCraney had made her usual preparations for attending church and passing out of her father's house sat down on the front steps, being suddenly taken ill and unable to proceed. She was assisted into the house and went to bed, never in her mortal frame to rise again. She grew worse gradually and her symptoms were of such a nature that her phys-

ician was somewhat mystified at first, for although the indications went to show that Huldah Ann was under the influence of poison, why should he have immediately suspected that murder had taken root in that quiet household and was developing night and day, with such unflagging haste that already it had hopelessly encircled the poor victim and was drawing her closer and ever closer in its fatal embrace?

Immediately following her death and perhaps even before the same, reports of sinister complexion were flying thick and fast. Arsenic was found entered on the books of the village apothecary against the name of McCraney and this, too, of recent dates.

Some people recollected the mysterious deaths, in an adjoining town, possibly from poison, that occurred eight or ten years before, in a house of which at that time this suspected woman was found to have been an inmate. Public sentiment compelled an examination of the remains of the dead and buried girl. Poison was revealed and upon the adduction of the damning proof followed the indictment by the Grand Jury.

Still, although under unceasing surveillance, she moved to and fro, impassively as of old, apparently oblivious to public choler now so dangerously aroused, she heeded it not, but followed her accustomed household paths undeviatingly as fate; alike

careless and indifferent to things present, or whatever to her the future might betide.

* * * * *

The day of her departure for Cooperstown to meet her trial in the courts is well remembered by many people still living in Oneonta.

Early in the morning the pre-arranged signal was received by certain village boys and young men that the time had arrived for action and almost simultaneously the officers of the law, accompanied by the McCraney family, took carriages and started for Cooperstown with the prisoner.

As they got fairly under way the church bells began to ring accompanied by the firing of guns, arousing the whole town. Sundry citizens, dressing quickly, hastened forth from their dwellings with pails in hand for the purpose of extinguishing fire, but were soon undeceived regarding the significance of this midnight tumult.

On the Oneonta creek bridge obstructions had been placed and Willis Snow having tried in vain to clear the passage way, the carriages were suddenly turned and the party made their egress from town via Maple street. Other reports state that the party made its exit via Main street, the impediments on the bridge having been removed.

Upon the acquittal of Mrs. McCraney, at the end of her trial, public indignation ran higher than ever. A reception committee was formed by

certain young men and an effigy of the woman was made and hung from a tree in front of her residence. Having returned to Oneonta at night-fall, she entered the house, having first passed under the hanging figure in the tree. The village boys then resorted to the hill slope in the rear of the house and rained a torrent of stones upon the roof and sides of the hated domicile.

Finally, upon the suggestion of one Burley, certain boys secured a can of turpentine and proceeded to saturate the effigy, whereupon the torch was applied and the burning of the suspended image followed, amid the shoutings and execrations of the assembled people.

A little later Mrs. McCraney was again indicted on suspicion of her connection with the other mysterious deaths already referred to and was again acquitted.

She remained in Oneonta several years afterwards and shortly following the death of her husband moved with her daughter Lucia to Nebraska.

John McCraney maintained his wife's innocence of the crime alleged, to the last and in the face of an unanimous public sentiment to the contrary.



1861

CHAPTER X.

AN OLD HOUSE.

THE OLD C. P. Huntington house that stood on the corner of Chestnut and Church streets appears very far back in the vista of my memory.

As most Oneonta people know, it was a square-shaped one story and attic structure with a piazza extending along its whole front and partly down its sides, this piazza being flanked by fluted round wooden pillars that reached from foundation to roof.

There was nothing uncommon about the rooms on the first floor, but the second or attic floor, reached by a rather steep stairway, comprised four sleeping rooms, each opening from a square central room at the head of the stairs.

This upper floor was lighted from the windows on the sides of the observatory surmounting the center of the roof which, while providing plenty of light for the middle room, left the side chambers in semi-obscurity. Each of these sleeping-rooms, however, had a swing window opening directly over a trap door in the ceiling of the piazza and by means of these places, when open, the natural darkness of the rooms was further modified.

Many years ago a lady told me in California of a startling experience that once befell her in this house, happening way back in the forties, before I was born.

She stated that while visiting there at a certain time, her entertainers were suddenly and unavoidably called away from town for a day or two and that before their departure she had decided to remain alone in the house during their absence. It was in cold wintry weather they left and the ground was deeply covered with snow.

During the balance of the day, time passed rapidly and she had no nervous fears over being left alone in the house until lighting the lamps upon the approach of night.

Then, for some reason inexplicable to herself, her mind became filled with certain vague and indefinable apprehensions, a feeling that some unseen danger was menacing. She endeavored to control herself and to feel they were but idle fears, but so strong were her misgivings, the doors and windows were locked and fastened that night with far more precaution than was usually observed.

She was to occupy a bedroom on the lower floor and, presently retiring thereto, for a long time sought sleep in vain, but eventually lost consciousness in a degree.

It was some hours afterwards that a sound aroused her with a sudden start and made her instinctively

feel that it was caused by something or somebody moving in the close vicinity. Listening in great nervous suspense, she heard the repetition of the sound and found that it came from some one attempting to unlock an outside door.

In extreme terror she got out of bed and hurriedly dressed herself. In the mean time, were faintly heard the stealthy steps of a man as he went from place to place on the piazza, trying every window and door and indicating a persistent determination to get within. Then, for a moment, the sound of his steps ceased and directly she knew that the fastenings of each rear window and door were being put to the test, but all successfully withstood the strain.

Then the man was heard again on the piazza and, taking some heavy flat-irons from the kitchen stove, she went up into the attic with the intention of dropping them down through a trap-door in the piazza ceiling on his head. This she failed to have the courage to attempt, however and the would-be robber below, all unconscious of her presence, did not abandon his nefarious designs entirely until warned by the light of approaching day.

To a nervous and unprotected woman it was truly compressing the fears of an ordinary life-time into a space of but few hours duration.

My first recollections of this old house are associated with my grandmother Huntington and aunt

Ellen M. Huntington (who were occupying it about the year 1860), and the profuse lilacs that bloomed in the yard.

My grandmother used to delight me, from a very youthful period of life, with stories of her own early days in Connecticut. She was a woman of beautiful disposition and I can truly say I never saw a frown on her face.

My aunt Ellen soon afterwards married the Rev. I. E. Gates, a young Baptist minister, who had recently graduated at Hamilton University and shortly afterwards they moved far out into the West.

In the spring of 1861 I think, Van Amburgh's circus and menagerie visited Oneonta and the writer attended the same accompanied by his grandmother Saunders. The tents were pitched on the Ingalls' property at the corner of West and Chestnut streets. I remember it was an extremely rainy day.



1863

CHAPTER XL.

A LONG JOURNEY.

IN THE ABOVE year we received a visit from my mother's father, Doctor Henry Saunders, of Burnt Hills, Saratoga County. He was an aged and greatly respected physician and a man of highly informed mind.

I was inclined to stand in great awe of my grandfather and my respect for him was not lessened when he presented me with sundry silver coins, which were quite a rarity in those war times.

The same year referred to, mother and I accompanied my grandfather on his return to Burnt Hills, traveling by private conveyance as far as Fort Plain, stopping the first night at the house of Mr. Sutliff in Cherry Valley.

At Fort Plain we took the New York Central cars for Schenectady and arriving there remained all night at the home of my aunt, Mrs. Daniel Van Vranken, who lived on Barrett street.

The brick houses, brick sidewalks, and paved streets of this ancient Dutch town made a profound impression upon the mind of the green country boy

who was completely awed by what seemed to him the grandeur and splendor of modest old "Dorp."

I here became attached with more than cousinly ardor to a little girl-relative but was too bashful to indicate it much.

The Fourth of July we spent at my grandfather's, eight miles from Schenectady and in the evening had fireworks at the house of my uncle, E. D. Saunders, who likewise lived at Burnt Hills.

Among the interesting features of my grandfather's home—on the site of which there had been a house prior to the Revolutionary War—and which made a lasting impression on my mind was a little brook that flowed through the premises and this brook was spanned by a rustic bridge near which I was very fond of fishing.

The driveway that lead from the street to the side door of the house was shaded in summer time by rows of maples. At the back end of this lane was a wooden headboard located over a grave near the point of an angle made by the house and the lane fence and upon this headboard was an inscription in Latin, commencing "Hic jacet Dandy," which I soon ascertained was meant to be in memory of a favorite dog that died about that time.

In the dooryard, on the opposite side of the house, was the largest elm tree I ever saw and not far from it was another mystery to me in the shape of a sundial.

Before returning home, we visited the house of an uncle of mine by marriage—Doctor E. M. Wade, of Watervliet, Albany County.

At the house of his father, the venerable Doctor James Wade, I remember seeing at this time one of the farm employes fall into a cistern by the sudden giving way of the flooring over the same.

The unfortunate man's name, I believe, was Perkins and he was immediately pulled out, not much the worse for his wetting.

But to return to Oneonta, after this little digression I will also invite the reader back to a period earlier in the year and endeavor to draw a little picture, such as it is, of my first experience at school.



CHAPTER XII.

BEGINNING OF SCHOOL LIFE.

I RECOLLECT distinctly the morning I first went to school.

Father had some business to transact with a man named Swart, who lived near the Slade farms and after breakfast of that eventful day, I got into the buggy and accompanied him over the river. We were absent from the village only a short time and upon returning home, I found Charlie Pardee at our house and straightway accompanied him to the halls of knowledge.

The schoolhouse was located on what is now called Grove street and was attended by perhaps seventy-five pupils.

The building was a two-story wood-colored frame structure, located three or four rods back from the street.

There was a large wood-house situated a few feet farther west and fronting about on a line with the rear foundation wall of the schoolhouse.

The ground in front of the latter was used by the boys for recreation purposes, it being flanked

on either side by a picket fence and open to the street in front. The favorite games were "Bull in the Ring," "Cracking the Whip," and "Pullaway."

Nearly opposite the play-ground was the First Baptist Church building with sheds located near by on the north and west sides for hitching horses. On the upper cross-beams of these sheds were stored long red ladders belonging to the village fire department. Directly under these beams were lower ones dividing each shed into numerous stalls. The first of these lower beams, commencing at Grove street, was located quite high from the ground while the ones following were less and less high in quite regular gradation as one went further and further from the street.

Now these lower beams and the horizontal ladders stretched over the upper ones constituted the gymnasium of our school in those rather primitive days and a boy's importance in a physical sense was somewhat governed by the facility with which he would either vault these lower beams or swing himself along the ladders with his hands, his feet in the mean time dangling in space. The small boys could vault but a few of the beams, while it was a proud day for older lads when, by placing their hands on top of the highest beam, they could clear the same, touching it with no other parts of their bodies.

Another source of amusement to the school boys was attempting to throw stones over the steeple of the church referred to.

There were two instruction-rooms in the old schoolhouse, and a portion of the time there were two teachers, one presiding upstairs, while the other conducted the downstairs school.

The lower schoolroom had a small hall-way in front. From this hall-way a rather steep flight of stairs, turning at right angles part way up ran to a small landing on the second floor, which answered for the ante-room of the upstairs school. These two little outer rooms contained each a pail of drinking water for the use of the pupils, while on the walls were rows of hooks or nails to accommodate hats, cloaks, scarfs, etc.

In the front part of each schoolroom was located, besides the desk of the teacher, a rather long "wood stove" surmounted by a sheet-iron drum of about the same length. On each side of each schoolroom was a single row of desks running from near the front to the extreme rear of the apartment, while projecting into the rooms from the middle of the rear wall was a chimney extending from the ground up to and through the roof. On either side of this chimney was also located a desk in both schoolrooms, while in front of the chimney and back of the stoves were sundry benches for the use of small children. Near each teacher's chair was a black-board and perhaps a wall map or two, this completing a full account of the furniture, I believe.

The desks of the boys which were all located on the side of each schoolroom toward the west, had

been hacked, cut and generally mutilated with jack-knives, while the plastered ceilings were ornamented with small paper wads which adventuresome urchins had prepared with their mouths and duly snapped upward when in a sufficiently moist condition to stick. If this could be done without attracting the attention of the teacher it was considered a feat worthy of emulation.

Miss D. Sullivan was my first school teacher and for the following five years commencing with the spring of 1863, I received school tuition from no other person. This confidence my parents had in her character and ability, I feel was fully warranted as I look back to that portion of my life with the judgment of matured years.

At the time I first entered school, Miss Sullivan had the upper room and I was placed on one of the low benches back of the stove.

The leading text-books of our school in those days, as I remember, were Sanders' Readers and Spelling Book, Clark's Grammar, Colton's Geography and Thompson's Arithmetics.

The first reading and spelling classes I was ever in comprised Adna Brazee, some one else whose name I have now forgotten and the writer. I remember when we took position it was always on a line with one of the cracks in the floor on the east or girls' side of the room and about even with the front of the stove.

I was very diffident in the presence of girls and when detected in mischief, the penalty oftentimes was for me to go and sit awhile with one of the opposite sex. It was punishment that kept me in the line of good behavior for a considerable time afterwards.

I think it was in my first term at school that I had the most severe case of nose bleed I ever experienced. After it was checked in a great degree, two of the girls escorted me home. This event seems a very long time ago, for I was only seven years old at that period of my life. The lapse of time is unheeded by the two young girls who took me home, for they have long since gone to a far country where time is reckoned not.



1863

CHAPTER XIII.

EARLY EXPERIENCES AND IMPRESSIONS.

PART I.

AMONG early personal recollections, I recall my association with two little girls, the daughters of a man named Adsit who was employed by father and occupied the upper part of a tenement house of ours, located at the base of the side hill orchard on the Dietz street level.

This house, still standing, was built I think about the year 1850 and was commonly called the barnyard house, on account of its proximity to the quarter indicated by the name.

I remember but vaguely the two little Adsit girls and one of the very few things I can definitely associate in my mind with them is the fact of their having been in possession, at that period, of a little movable open wooden cupboard, the base containing perhaps three shelves, each about one foot wide, while the upper portion comprised maybe three more shelves, each about eight inches wide.

The two little girls and the writer were fond of

“keeping house” with this cupboard and many of their childish treasures found a receptacle therein.

This was a long time ago and for a generation and a half the Adsit children have been to me only a memory.

I think the next permanent impression upon my mind was made by the death of Mrs. Hezekiah Watkins. I remember the funeral of this highly respected lady at the old Watkins homestead on the corner of Chestnut and Academy streets.

The next memorable event was my coming into possession of a pair of red zouave pants, about the time of the opening of the Rebellion and during the same period I rejoiced in the possession of a pair of copper-toed shoes.

Another recollection of this time was the excitement attending the enlistment of soldiers for the war, which was several fold increased by the receipt of the intelligence of the first Bull Run disaster.

About this period I began occasionally to visit my cousins Frank and Charlie Pardee, who were living in the house on the west bank of the Oneonta creek on the north side of Main street, close to the bridge. Here I became acquainted with Charlie Baldwin, son of the Rev. Wm. Baldwin, the Presbyterian minister.

My first boy playmate in that part of the village where I lived was Arthur Sullivan and through him I became acquainted with Howard Farmer and

Eddie Carpenter, with all of whom I played more or less in the early part of the sixties.

In Mr. Sullivan's front yard was a large apple tree (still standing) and from one of its limbs was suspended a swing which the writer and his companions made more or less use of.

Another source of amusement to us was the game of "Chickeny, chickeny, craney crow."

I think the first place I ever went fishing was on the flat where Mechanic street now is. At that time there were neither streets, railroad, nor buildings of any kind (except the old distillery shell) between the Main street stores and the Mill Ditch and this flat, swampy ground was traversed by a rivulet which afforded some little sport in the piscatorial line.

My first skating was on the old Frog Pond which was situated close to the livery stable that stands in the rear of the Windsor Hotel. This pond has long since disappeared and was doubtless unknown to all born in the present generation.



CHAPTER XIV.

FIRST RETURN TO THE OLD DISTRICT SCHOOL.

I THINK IT WAS at the beginning of the winter term of 1864—1865, that Miss Sullivan discontinued her private school on Dietz street and resumed her former position in the old District School.

The same winter the boys derived a great deal of pleasure in an exhilarating sport practiced by them in the front First Baptist church-yard and this is the way it was done.

The church-yard had as it does to this day a somewhat abrupt fall, commencing at the front steps of the edifice and extending nearly all the way down to Main street. The boys, by constantly sliding on their feet down this slope when covered with snow and each following in the tracks made by his predecessor, had worn two deep parallel grooves several inches apart.

One cold evening, shortly afterwards, some enterprising urchins had carried several pails of water to the top of the hill and poured the contents into the grooves. Zero weather then promptly finished the

work for the boys, so that the following morning they could not only slide down the icy lines with greatly accelerated speed, but with, what was equally attractive to them, an increased element of danger in the line of a bad fall in case of accident.

In the winter season, I usually carried my lunch to school, and when the noon hour arrived, ate with a zest that does not seem to characterize my appetite in these later days.

It was about this period I used to play a great deal with Charlie Hopkins and was inclined to look upon him with more than ordinary interest from the fact that he had lived in Kansas, which stamped him in my mind as having been a great traveller. I think about the same time Charlie Smith made a trip to Chicago to visit a relative and this placed him likewise on a pedestal in the estimation of his fellows.

Among the recess recreations indulged in by the boys was forming sides of about equal numbers and after taking position in two parallel lines facing each other, having a contest of snow-balling. When a member of one side was hit he joined his opponents and was soon zealously working against his former comrades. In the course of a little while the superior marksmanship of one party or the other would leave not a solitary human target in the opposite field.

CHAPTER XV.

1865

FOR THE FIVE YEARS immediately preceding 1865, Oneonta could show but little growth. Remote from railroad facilities during most of this time, it was indeed an out of the way place.

The village in the above year, before the coming of the railroad, comprised of its present one hundred streets only the following: Main, Chestnut, Maple, Dietz, West, River and Church, High, Academy and Grove streets in part only, the four latter being extended in later years.

The business quarter of Main street comprised at that time on the northerly side, a blacksmith shop, two frame hotels, a stone store, a frame marble shop, a one-story frame public hall, and several frame houses. The southerly side of the street besides a blacksmith shop had several stone stores, a frame carriage factory, a frame engine-house, likewise a cabinet shop, one or two houses and quite a number of stores all of the same material and looking much the worse for wear. These latter structures were usually two stories high in front, while on

account of being built on the slope of a bank were three or four stories high in the rear.

Main, Dietz, Chestnut, Academy, River and perhaps Maple, were the only streets that could boast of even a little wooden sidewalk and this was usually confined to one side of each street.

The roadbed of Main street was extremely irregular with no curbing, while its surface contained many ruts and hollow places in which the water would settle and remain for a considerable time after each rain.

In front of the residence lot of E. R. Ford, Esq., Main street dropped down into a little valley to such an extent that a person standing at the foot of Chestnut street would lose sight of the Cooperstown stage entirely when it reached that portion of the thoroughfare.

The old Angell hotel was called the Oneonta House and the name was painted on the Chestnut street gable end above the pillars with a great space reserved between "Oneonta" and "House" for the insertion of "Railroad" when the proper time arrived. This, I believe, was either the idea of Mr. Angell or John M. Watkins, and the missing word was eventually inserted by their successor, Charles W. Lewis.

The Susquehanna House had a large, conspicuous square-shaped swinging sign projecting from the principal corner of the hotel and containing a

picture of an eagle with extended wings, while its feet were resting on a representation of our globe, beneath which, at the lower end of the sign, was lettered the name of the hotel.

There were two or three fires on Chestnut street during this period, the only one which I personally recollect, occurring in January, 1865 and resulting in the total loss of the house of Mrs. Ingalls, near West street.

On Academy street, near the Burton house, there was a well beneath the middle of the sidewalk, which a portion of the time furnished drinking water for the children in the district school.

There was a public watering place for horses on West street near Chestnut, the trough projecting from Colonel Snow's yard and being supplied from the two little spring houses on the slope of Snow Hill, as many will remember. The principal watering place for horses, however, was the round, open tank in the rear of the Oneonta House and approachable from both streets. This tank was also used to cool off sundry citizens who occasionally allowed rum, gin or whiskey to get the best of them.

But the dawn of a new era had now arrived and old Oneonta was passing away.

1865

CHAPTER XVI.

EARLY EXPERIENCES AND IMPRESSIONS.

PART II.

AT THE TIME of which I now write, the late Potter C. Burton, an old and respected citizen of Oneonta had his jewelry store in a one-story building located in front of where now stands the fine Chestnut Street residence, which he built some years before his death.

There was a platform with railing located in front of Mr. Burton's old store and the floor of this platform which was about on the level of the doorstep was reached by a short flight of steps at either end.

When a small boy, I thought it quite a treat to visit this store, admire the jewelry in the show cases and hear the ticking of many clocks.

I now began to take more interest in various attractive points in the vicinity of the village, coupled with a desire to visit them. I soon had opportunities for carrying out these inclinations and presently was fairly well acquainted with places as remote as The Dam and the rocky portion of the

Silver Brook bed. I had also met with two or three very respectable accidents (as far as their magnitude was concerned) for a boy of my years. The first was in burying the barb of a fish hook in the palm of my hand while fishing in the above-mentioned brook, necessitating the services of Dr. S. H. Case and the other was in falling through the platform in front of my father's carriage factory and dropping a distance of perhaps eight feet before reaching the ground. The latter exploit rendered me unconscious for a little time but I was all right again in a day or two.

Presently, I extended my explorations up the Silver Brook road as far as Betsey Couse's lot—a famous place for strawberries. In those days there were on the Campbell farm at the foot of the ravine the ruins of an old building which, I think, had been originally erected as a distillery. On the upper side of the road, a little above the Blend farmhouse on West street, there was also at that time a log house—the last one remaining within the limits of the village, I believe.

About the same time, I visited the mill pond more or less and with certain boy friends scraped pitch off the ends of the saw logs, also discovered General Burnside's spring and the large trout therein and eventually explored the passage way in the rear of the old stores and listened to the mysterious coughing of the water rams.

Chestnut street was then much steeper than at present. In the winter season the boys would take their sleds and starting from, what was then the top of a hill in this thoroughfare, somewhat above Church street, would ride rapidly all the way down to Main street. This was a recreation that was extremely popular with them.



CHAPTER XVII.

GREAT THUNDER STORM.

AT ELEVEN O'CLOCK in the evening of May 21, 1865, Oneonta experienced the commencement of perhaps the most severe thunder-storm that ever came under the observation of the writer.

The following morning the townspeople were filled with astonishment upon witnessing the havoc wrought by the watery element.

Silver Brook had temporarily made for itself a second channel north of Center street, where the stony bed can probably be traced to this day.

Farther down the stream the bed of the brook became clogged with old stumps, logs, etc., to such a degree that the water backed up into the upper Dietz street dooryards, flooding cellars and leaving a layer of gravel several inches deep in the flower garden of Mrs. David Morrell, completely ruining the same.

Another current of water leaped the boundaries of its natural channel and rushed in the direction of Main street, eventually reaching and crossing

that thoroughfare directly into the basement of William Johnston's clothing store and thence flowed down the steep bank in the rear.

The bridge near the Presbyterian church was badly broken, while fifty feet of wooden sidewalk adjacent was torn up and carried away by the raging waters.

Many of the older residents will remember this storm and I think will agree that its wide-sweeping and devastating effects have fortunately never been paralleled by those of any storm since, in the village of Oneonta.



1865

CHAPTER XVIII.

ADVENTURE AT WORCESTER.

TOWARD THE END OF SPRING my mother and I accompanied my grandfather—Doctor Saunders, on his return to Saratoga County, after having made a visit at our house.

We travelled by private conveyance as far as the New York Central railroad at Fort Plain.

The first day out from Oneonta I remember being impressed by the great magnitude of the famous George Clarke barn in the town of Milford.

We stopped at Westville for dinner, remained all night at Cherry Valley and reached our destination the following night.

Upon our return from my grandfather's, we travelled by rail from Albany to Worcester, the latter point then being the terminus of the Albany and Susquehanna railroad.

Upon reaching Worcester, we stopped over night with Rev. Wm. Baldwin and family, Mr. Baldwin, formerly of Oneonta, then being pastor of the Presbyterian church at Worcester.

The following morning this gentleman's youngest son, Charlie, and the writer started out in search of adventure.

Our explorations carried us into a piece of woods located on a hill a little northeast of the village, but discovering nothing there of a startling character we resumed our travels, which eventually brought us to a mill pond near the line of the railroad, perhaps half a mile east of Worcester.

Here we found so much of interest requiring our attention that time sped entirely unnoted by us in its flight.

It was not far from the noon hour when a sound came down the valley, which filled my mind with consternation and started me on a run against time.

It was the whistle of a locomotive bringing in the Albany train and I knew this train made connection with the Oneonta stage, which my mother and I were to take for home that day. I failed to think that the incoming passengers would stop for dinner at Worcester before proceeding on their journey and felt that my chances were rather desperate for catching the stage.

I was about nine years of age and somewhat younger than my companion, but distanced him, while my other competitor, the train, quickly left me in the rear.

It was a very warm day and upon arriving at Mr. Baldwin's I was just able to get into the house, being completely overcome with heat and exhaustion, but in time to go out on the stage.

In riding over the Susquehanna railroad in these later times, I think either Worcester must have grown a great deal since that memorable day, else some mighty convulsion of nature has forced the mill pond closer to town than it used to be.



1865

CHAPTER XIX.

THE RAILROAD CELEBRATION.

TOWARD THE CLOSE OF SUMMER, Oneonta saw a day that was the most memorable in all her history—a day that may be termed the bright particular turning point in her career and which revealed the first faint glimmerings of that subsequent remarkable prosperity which is so well testified to by her great solid lines of brick and masonry which we now see.

That auspicious day was the 29th of August and the occasion was the formal opening up to business of the Albany and Susquehanna railroad between Oneonta and the capital city of the State.

In this place it is proper to mention the name of an old and prominent citizen, whose energy and ability were conspicuously shown in overcoming the physical obstacles that existed in the face of this great work between Cobleskill and Oneonta. As most of my readers doubtless anticipate, I refer to Harvey Baker.

The 29th of August opened with a beautiful morning and before the day had far advanced

every highway leading into the village was more or less thronged with people afoot and in conveyances, all bound for the common point of attraction.

The citizens had appointed a reception committee, comprising E. R. Ford, Esq., L. L. Bundy, Esq., John M. Ferrell, D. M. Miller, Colonel W. W. Snow, D. J. Yager, Esq., and Timothy Sabin, while another committee had erected arches completely spanning the prominent streets. These structures were profusely decorated with flags and flowers and likewise displayed mottoes in the following significant sentences :

“Friends of our Enterprise. Welcome ;” “Isolation obsolete ;” “The Hudson and Susquehanna united ;” “Ramsey, our little Giant ;” “State Officials—their Deeds in Lines of Iron ;” “Ex-Governor, no Veto ;” “Governor Fenton, our Railroad Friend” and “The Directors, Labor Omnia Vincit.”

The stores and public buildings were also decorated with flags.

About noon the excursion train from Albany arrived, bringing another addition to what was already the largest number of people Oneonta had ever seen within her borders at one time. Among the newly arrived guests were many prominent State and railroad officials, who were met at the depot by four companies of Colonel Dunbar’s 41st regiment of State militia, headed by Major-General S. S. Burnside and staff.

The invited guests were then escorted to the two village hotels, where dinner was served.

Early in the afternoon the distinguished visitors, accompanied by the reception committee, repaired to the First Baptist church-yard where L. L. Bundy, Esq., called the vast crowd to order.

Speeches were then made by Governor Fenton, Lieut. Governor Alvord, Hon. J. H. Ramsey, Judge Gould, Wm. Steuart, Esq., Hon. George A. Starkweather and P. P. Rogers, Esq.

At four o'clock P. M., the invited guests took the train to return to Albany and their departure was made amid cheers from the men and boys, booming of cannon, music of the bands and the waving of many handkerchiefs in the hands of the fair sex.

It was truly a day whose enthusiasm is rarely equaled.



CHAPTER XX.

BURGLARS IN TOWN.

IN THE EARLY HOURS of the morning of December 13th of the above year, when all good townspeople were ordinarily supposed to be buried in sleep, an attempt was made by burglars to rob the well known store of Cope Brothers and Company, located on the corner of Main and Broad streets.

An entrance had already been effected through the rear wall of the store building, when a slight noise, made by one of the cracksmen, awakened Messrs. Collins and Hudson, two attaches who were sleeping in the building.

These gentlemen immediately suspected the true condition of affairs and as promptly prepared to checkmate if possible the nefarious designs of the midnight intruders.

The latter, however, becoming aware in turn of the presence of other people as wide awake to the nature of the occasion as themselves, concluded that their attempt was a failure and hastily fled in the direction of the railroad.

Later in the same day a carpet bag, containing a full set of burglar's tools, was discovered on the ground in the rear of the store where the robbery was attempted. These professional implements had evidently been dropped by the two men in their hasty flight.

My recollection is that the identity of these burglars was never established. Their bold attempt, I remember, made considerable excitement in the little community at the time.



CHAPTER XXI.

FIRST BUSINESS VENTURES.

ABOUT THE FIRST of March of this year, Charlie Pardee and the writer conceived the idea that there was a large profit in the sheep business and, although without capital to inaugurate such an undertaking, we concluded that an application made to our respective fathers—placing the matter in its proper auspicious light—could not fail to secure us the loan necessary to begin operations with.

Our negotiations were successful and directly we found ourselves in possession of all the money we asked for—an amount sufficient to buy us one sheep of the ewe denomination.

Having secured the money, we straightway started afoot for the rural districts to buy our stock.

In the course of our travels we reached the farm of a Mr. Morrell, found out he had just what we wanted and was ready to consider any proposition we might advance relative to the price.

In a short time we had closed a bargain with him and were leading our property home attached to a rope, which latter part of the proceeding she seemed inclined to take some exception to.

After considerable hard work and persuasion, we eventually reached Charlie's home and duly secured our prize in the barn.

But somehow or other after that, things did not go with us in our business venture as well as we had anticipated ; perhaps our stock was not thorough-bred ; perhaps, too, there was an element of expense in maintaining sheep we had not correctly calculated upon. Anyway, it was but a few weeks afterwards that we came to the conclusion that the sheep industry was a failure and sold out our stock for the best terms we could get.

The following summer Charlie and I concluded to make another experiment in a business way. This time we decided to try agriculture.

Now my father had recently opened up Church and Center streets through his farm and between these streets and Silver Brook was a little triangular piece of ground with a large maple tree in front, still standing at the present day. This place we selected for our farming operations, father having promised to have one of his men plough the ground for us. The soil having been broken up, we put therein barley and awaited developments.

But again fortune frowned upon our youthful ambition, for the maple tree made too much shade or perhaps the weather was not propitious. Anyway, we never gathered our crop and my recollection is, there was very little to gather.

1866

CHAPTER XXII.

EARLY EXPERIENCES AND IMPRESSIONS

PART III.

I REMEMBER distinctly the shock it gave to our little community when, upon that fatal day in April, 1865, the awful intelligence arrived that Lincoln had fallen by the assassin's bullet.

While in the full tide of rejoicing over the news from Appomattox, the blow fell with the unexpectedness of a thunderbolt upon our people, abruptly turning their liveliest joy into the bitterness of grief.

It was not many months after this that Oneonta's soldier boys returned home for good from the scenes of the encampment, the march and the battle and then were the old war songs heard throughout the land with a fullness of pleasure they had never created before.

The advent of the railroad, a little later, caused extraordinary enthusiasm among the small boys. There was a lad living on Chestnut street who did not get over the effects of it for a year. He possessed a small hand cart and knew no greater delight than propelling it rapidly up and down the streets, at the

same time puffing and tooting in imitation of the locomotive.

Some of us used to frequent the vicinity of the railroad depot a great deal and watch for the incoming trains. This was particularly fascinating in the night time.

Occasionally we would put crossed pins on top of the rail in front of the approaching train and, after the wheels had all passed over, would discover the pins nicely flattened and joined, so as to resemble a diminutive pair of shears.

We were constantly on the lookout for new locomotives and knew all their names and corresponding numbers. Among the earlier names of engines which I still recall are—"E. C. Delavan," "E. R. Ford," "E. P. Prentice," "Jared Goodyear," "John Cook," "Charles Courter," "Minard Harder," "A. B. Watson," "J. H. Ramsey," "Peter Cagger" and "John Westover."

Charles A. Jones and other engineers would occasionally allow some of the boys to ride on the locomotive while switching in the Oneonta yard and this was a rare treat for us.

At that time an engine-house and turn-table were located between the depot and the mill ditch.

C. W. Lewis and Place & Huntington, hotel proprietors, had closed carriages or hacks running between their houses and the depot and an occasional gratuitous ride in these was likewise duly appreciated by the boys.

On the 19th day of March, 1866, I accompanied the excursion train to Unadilla, in honor of the formal opening of the railroad for business as far as that point. Our train was drawn by the locomotive "E. R. Ford," and upon arrival from Albany and departure from Oneonta it was duly saluted by General Burnside's "brass six-pounder."

I formed an impression regarding the wealth and enterprise of Unadilla that was not complimentary to Oneonta.

Among the business and professional men of Oneonta about 1866 were E. R. Ford, Solon Huntington, Harvey Baker, Charles W. Lewis, Place & Huntington, J. C. Tice, Silas Sullivan, A. G. Shaw, D. M. Miller, Cope Brothers & Co., L. S. Osborn, Peters & Wickwire, John M. Packard, S. H. Case, M. D.; Meigs Case, M. D.; H. A. Hamilton, M. D.; N. C. Moak, J. H. Keyes, S. J. Cooke, Bundy & Bridges, P. G. Wieting, S. Bowen, William McCrum, R. W. Hopkins, William D. Bissell, William Johnston, A. Mendel & Brothers, James Roberts & Co., Jay McDonald, N. I. Ford, D. J. Yager, E. C. Bundy, Marble & Farmer, T. S. Gault, A. Chapman, Peck & Coates, Reynolds Bros. & Francisco, A. D. Reynolds, M. D.; David T. Evans, M. D.; William H. Morris, Albert Morris, L. P. Carpenter, G. W. Reynolds, Elisha Shepherd, S. Brownson, M. Keenan, David Morrell, L. Goldsmith, T. J. Gildersleeve, A. J. Gates, Timothy Watkins, J. R. L. Walling, Timothy Sabin,

E. R. Sabin, Potter C. Burton, Col. W. W. Snow, Major-General S. S. Burnside, J. P. Van Woert, M. N. Elwell, H. Shellman, Turner McCall, H. J. Brewer, N. D. Jewell, George Bond, S. Hudson, H. S. Pardee, W. S. Fritts, Anthony White, Deacon Bingham, William Mickel, John Cutshaw, J. S. Doolittle and H. McCall.

Oneonta, at that time, possessed an excellent high school and among its old faculty will be remembered the names of Professor N. N. Bull, Misses Hill, Miller, Flora A. Potter and Mrs. Bowman. This school occasionally gave public exhibitions, both in the new Ford store building on Broad street and in the Free-Will Baptist Church.

Sometimes, in the winter season, the pupils had enjoyable sleigh rides to neighboring towns. In January, 1866, under the auspices of Mrs. D. M. Miller and Mrs. Bowman, a sleigh ride to Laurens was given for the pleasure of the pupils.

At this time, the district school was being conducted by Mrs. Furman and various assistants.

There were one or two public libraries in Oneonta in those days and my impression is, the young ladies were very partial to the works of an authoress named Mary J. Holmes—such as “*Tempest and Sunshine*,” “*Lena Rivers*,” “*Cousin Maud*,” *et cætera*.

In the early part of the evenings of the spring of 1866, the boys in the neighborhood of Church and High streets would congregate in front of the old

Methodist Church on the hill to take part in various games. I recollect some of the boys on one occasion had gathered some pitch-pine fagots and with the assistance of these and a quantity of pitch scraped from the ends of saw-logs we concluded to have a grand illumination. So taking an empty tin-can, with one side gone, we nailed it to a stake driven into the ground on the green directly in front of the old church. Then, in this elevated receptacle, we placed some of the resinous and inflammable material and lighting the same, immediately threw the shades of night far into the background, much to the astonishment of pedestrians who happened to be in the vicinity.

It was in the same spring that my grandmother Huntington left Oneonta to take up her residence with a daughter in the western part of the State and her departure was a sad one to every member of her family living in Oneonta—both old and young. She was much beloved by her grandchildren and would entertain them by the hour with story and verse of the days of her childhood in far-away Connecticut.

She died a few years later at her western home.



1866.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A SUMMER DAY.

HOW WELL DO I REMEMBER the feeling of pleasure inspiring me upon going forth into the atmosphere of a beautiful summer morning.

Old Sol had perhaps already made his appearance a full hour before me and was making fine progress on his way up the eastern heavens.

But something of a more practical nature than speculating upon the travels of the old fellow in the fiery chariot would directly draw my attention, in the shape of a yawning wood-box, whose demands were ever daily recurring and imperative for me to make good the constant draughts made upon it by Rebecca in the prosecution of her household duties.

Then the hired men would be seen approaching the house from the direction of the orchard, bringing with them the "morning's milk," which they would duly deposit in the cool, spacious cellar.

After breakfast, I would start with the cows for pasture, occasionally receiving on the way other cattle belonging to townspeople, who liked for their stock the grassy and convenient slopes of our farm.

How well do I recall the appearance of those dumb companions of my boyhood. Of father's stock there was the old black cow ; the small brown one ; the two white ones and the red heifer—the latter, although perhaps the oldest in the herd, still bore the name applied in her youth. She was the defender of her companions against the street attacks of any and all assailants belonging to her race and achieved a greater and more lasting reputation in warfare than for her value in the more peaceful and useful life of the dairy.

During a portion of this season, Charlie Pardee made it a practice to accompany me every morning with the cows to pasture and upon each arrival at our destination—which was just below the house of Eseck Blend, on West street—we would duly scratch a mark with a sharp-edged stone on the rail-fence by the bars. Traces of these marks were still distinguishable on the old rails many years later—although frost, snow, rain and heat had successively tried their best to obliterate them.

Toward noon, if it was school vacation, or perhaps in the afternoon, the village boys would resort to The Flume and avail themselves of the pleasures in the way of a swim offered by its shaded precincts. On our way there other boys might be seen in the distance and duly hailed, accompanied by an invitation to likewise repair to the cooling waters. This invitation was usually extended in pantomime, by

throwing up the right arm perpendicularly, with simply the index and middle fingers projecting from the hand.

The waters of The Flume, entering by a narrowed channel beneath the bridge and between two large trees, were shot forward with much velocity for a few feet, when, the banks of the stream separating more, the current became materially reduced in its speed.

The southerly bank bordered the usual entering place of the bathers at a point where its contour assumed a shape approaching semi-circular. Here the water was quite deep and admitted of diving directly from the bank. The bed of the stream on its opposite side, however, descended quite gradually from the shore and was more resorted to by small boys and beginners.

Below the entering place on the southerly side was a line of small piles, between which and the bank were placed brush and stones to protect the adjoining land from the assaults of the watery tide.

Near the head of The Flume and parallel with the course of its current extended the submerged sill of a building which had formerly stood in this place. This sill was located near the southerly bank, a foot or two beneath the surface of the water and although a little removed from the extreme force of the current, still made a rather precarious footing. The older boys, however, adopted this as a common resting-place when not swimming.

It was a favorite amusement for the bathers to dive for pieces of white marble that could be plainly seen on the bed of the stream and if my memory fails me not, one of these bits of marble had formerly served as the footstone of a grave and still bore the initials of the dead.

Toward the close of the day I would—at times reluctantly—leave my sports and, warned by the setting sun, repair to the pasture to bring home the cows.

Sometimes, but not often, I would fail to find them in sight upon reaching the old bars and then would be obliged to climb the hill in search of them.

Perhaps, too, it would be getting late and the great shadows thrown by the western hills were creeping fast into the valley, although on the opposite heights my surroundings were still submerged with the sunny but mellowed light of the dying day. Then the stillness of tired Nature turning to her rest seemed to permeate the atmosphere with a peaceful languor born of sympathy with the occasion, while the increasing melancholy of approaching twilight seemed intensified by the occasional tinkling of a bell in some distant pasture or fold.

At last the truants were found in the back field by the woods and straightway hastened on their way homeward.

In the early evening the stillness of our village would perhaps be broken presently by the prelim-

inary notes of Colonel Uebel's brass band practicing in a room over the Hopkins furniture store on Chestnut street and again people passing on the same thoroughfare would sometimes hear the softer and more agreeable notes of both vocal and instrumental music floating out through the maple trees in front of the old Burton residence.

Finally, with the fast-accumulating dew on grass and leaf, the evening hastened apace, young people wended their way homeward, the merchant closed his store, the sounds of melody ceased, a great hush filled earth and sky and with the disappearing village lights the universal rest and peace were unbroken save perhaps by the occasional notes of the whip-poor-will as they came floating down from the sombre slopes of Snow Hill.



CHAPTER XXIV.

THE OLD FIRE DEPARTMENT.

AS early as the middle of the forties Oneonta had a Volunteer Fire Department and possibly even before then.

My recollection of the organization begins with the early sixties.

At that time the engine house stood on what is now the head of Broad street, a little back from Main street. With the opening up of the former thoroughfare in 1865 the engine house was removed to a point on Dietz street about opposite the residence of Meigs Case, M. D.

In those days Oneonta had no public water works and "rain water" was accordingly stored for fire emergencies in large cisterns, one of which was located in the end of Dietz street where it joins Main, while another was in the front of the First Baptist Churchyard. I think, originally, there was also a cistern in front of the engine house where it stood before being removed to Dietz street.

The apparatus in 1866 consisted simply of a hand-engine, hose carriage and accompanying parapher-

nalía; but with finely-polished brass and copper mountings, the former looked extremely imposing to the village boys.

There were, to be sure, a lot of fire ladders referred to in a previous part of this book, but they still remained nicely stored away on the upper beams of the First Baptist Church sheds in company with sundry hooks for lack of a proper vehicle.

The name of the organized fire company at this period was "Resolute, No. 1;" Foreman, Harrison J. Collins; First Assistant, William H. Mosher; Second Assistant, Henry D. Jennings; Secretary and Treasurer, Norman J. Farmer.

Occasionally this company would make a public appearance for drill or exhibition, dressed in their bright uniforms and proudly drawing the engine.

Having reached the proper place and dropping in the cistern the suction pipe, the firemen would range themselves along each side of the machine and, seizing the two long longitudinal pumping rods, give such a lusty proof of their physical powers that no one present could ever say they belied the name of their organization. To the small-boy spectators, the water shooting from the nozzle of the hose seemed to climb almost to the very heavens.



1866

CHAPTER XXV.

GENERAL TRAINING.

TOWARD THE CLOSE OF SEPTEMBER of the above year, a General Training was held in Oneonta.

It was participated in by two regiments of the State Militia, and I think was the last military spectacle of the kind our town was ever favored with.

Several events of this character are comprised within my recollection of the old days at home and the young people especially looked upon General Trainings with a favor only equaled by that which they displayed for Fourth of July and circus days.

The usual drilling ground was down on the river flats adjacent to the village and the crowds of people attracted to town from the neighboring rural districts were immense.

Those were proud days for our prominent citizen, Major-General S. S. Burnside, who commanded the troops.

The General Training of 1866 was memorable in another respect, and that was on account of the

inordinate rainfall which sadly marred the success of the occasion.

Charlie Baker acted as one of General Burnside's orderlies and, nicely mounted on his prancing steed, was the object of considerable envy to the other village boys.

On Thursday, September 20th, the Hon. Reuben E. Fenton, governor of our great commonwealth, arrived at Oneonta to participate in the glories of military life. His Excellency took quarters at the Susquehanna House.

In the afternoon of that same day the Governor attempted to review the soldiers between the rains, but, the weather continuing so unpropitious, everyone felt that the whole affair was a most dismal failure.

The following day, it still being stormy, the troops disbanded and started for their homes.

I think this was the close of General Burnside's active military life.



CHAPTER XXVI.

WINTER SPORTS.

IN THE SHORT WINTER DAYS of our northern latitude, country boys were expected to be up in the morning and dressed before there was any great quantity of light in the eastern horizon. In fact, it was more or less a common thing oftentimes for the writer to have breakfast by lamplight, illuminating gas at that time being an unknown quantity in Oneonta.

The extreme cold weather at that period of the year compelled us to take precautions for the safety of our ears and fingers when exposed to the frosty outdoor atmosphere. Like most boys, I usually wore a heavy woolen scarf or comforter and mittens of the same warm material.

In those days we had, not far from our house, a large barn that stood upon the side of the hill. On one side of the basement of this barn was a row of five stalls with space in the rear for horses to come in and go out, while the other side of the basement was the bottom of a great place extending unobstructed from the ground to the roof and used for

storing loose hay. This place was called the bay. The main floor of the barn was just above the stable and about even with the level of the ground upon the upper side of the building. This floor was sometimes used for threshing both with flails and horse-power and usually contained, on one side, near the granary and open spaces where hay was thrown down to the horses, a large red fanning mill. On the other side of the threshing floor was the great bay extending above and below, with its perpendicular face of hay in the winter time, while along in the spring it became quite empty.

Above the threshing floor were the two scaffolds which contained grain in the sheaf, with the bay on one side and on the other an additional place for storing hay, the latter being located a little below the scaffolds. This barn, with a smaller one at the lower end of the barnyard, constituted the scenes of recreation for many a village boy at sundry times in the winter season, the favorite amusement being Hide and Seek. Sometimes the more daring would jump from the scaffolds into the hay, which made a drop of many feet for them when the hay was getting reduced in quantity.

About this time, as a boy of ten years, I witnessed an exciting scene in our barnyard, in which Richard Crandall and a pair of steers bore a conspicuous part. Dick, having a little leisure time upon his hands one day, thought he would break these

animals to the neck-yoke, but the plan was exactly reversed, for the steers broke the yoke instead and for many long years thereafter it remained in an out of the way part of our cow stable as a memento of that exciting day.

Coasting and skating were as a matter of course extremely common amusements with us in winter. Sometimes a boy would hitch his hand sled behind a cutter or sleigh outward bound from the village and, if the driver was not inclined to respond to the suggestion of other boys at a distance to "whip behind," the lucky urchin would perhaps ride a long way into the country, returning home, if he happened to be fortunate, behind some equally accommodating farmer or traveler who did not object to furnishing motive power.

A boy friend and the writer took a sleigh ride with my father about this period, to some farm not remote from the classic precincts of Baker Hill. It was a very cold day and upon arriving at our destination we were glad of a chance to go inside and warm ourselves by a hot kitchen fire. The lady of the house took much interest in our comfort and to add to her hospitalities she finally said to her daughter: "Miranda, can't you bring out the piano and give the boys some music?" Miranda was a stout, healthy, vigorous looking girl but the piano failed to show itself.

Boys and girls in those days used to go skating on the Mill Pond, The Plains lake, and the Goose Pond. The latter was between Luther street and the river, but is now mostly filled in, I think.

The Plains lake was rather remote, while the Mill Pond was the preferable place in most respects. We could not only utilize the frozen pond, but oftentimes found the skating good a long ways up the mill ditch, including the Cove, which was an overflowed place near the eastern base of Barn Hill.

I have not seen Oneonta in the winter time for nearly fourteen years, but taking a summer view of the old Mill Pond impresses one that, with the diminution of its waters, the skating upon its frozen surface in the winters of these later years can hardly be as extended or satisfactory as it was in the boyhood days of the writer, who knew it at its best.



CHAPTER XXVII.

FALLING LEAVES.

NEVER, ELSEWHERE, in the course of extended travels in the autumn months have I seen the foliage of tree and bush assume more gorgeous and resplendent colors of variegated hue than one can almost always witness on my native hills in the fall of the year.

The maples especially, when only in ordinary attire, are the glory of the Otsego landscape, but having abandoned sober green for the brilliant tints bought for a few fleeting days with their receding life's blood, the effect constitutes a picture that Nature, be she ever so prodigal, can afford us but once a year.

Those were the days of frosty mornings and barren fields ; when our song birds had taken their flight to the less rigorous climes of the south land ; when the silence of the woods was impressive and deep, although occasionally broken by some nut-seeking squirrel sharply protesting at the intrusion which interrupted the gathering of his winter's store, or by the loud, quick tapping of a woodpecker on some neighboring tree.

Boys, and men as well, were occasionally seen in the woods on the summits and slopes of the outlying hills emulating the industry of the squirrel, but with a spirit of mutual rivalry added, in attempting to gather the larger quantity of chestnuts. They not only clubbed the trees but if the burrs were well opened ascended up to and shook the limbs, gathering the fruits of their adventure in well filled sacks or baskets.

On the way toward home they would sometimes stop and prospect well-known trees in the fields, but were usually there disappointed, finding the ground strewn with clubs and tenantless burrs.

Later on, the forlorn hope arrived and pushed away the dead leaves with stick and cane, rarely discovering a nut overlooked by squirrels and men.

Those were likewise the days when was heard the sound of the flail, sometimes hollow and muffled in its tone when the stalks lay deep and thick, and anon the strokes would sound quick and sharp as the lusty hired men worked slowly up and down the threshing floor.

In later years horse-power machinery was called upon to do this work as well as to saw up the winter's supply of firewood.

Indoor games at night grew popular with young people as the fall season hastened, although there were few autumn evenings in September and October, but what boys could maintain a comforta-

ble bodily heat outside the house if they kept in motion much of the time. This was illustrated in such games as "I Spy," which afforded us great fun and excitement.

Another source of amusement for the boy fraternity in the fall of the year was furnished by the jack-lanterns, whose ogreish faces with long, sharp-pointed teeth were occasionally seen on top of some convenient fence post, or were suddenly thrust in and as quickly withdrawn from the faces of startled pedestrians by the mischievous lads concealed on the opposite side of the fence.

The trees had now been nearly stripped of their summer mantles and the dead leaves thickly strewed the ground. So numerous, dry and crisp were they in yard and path alike that belated boys in walking through them often gave waiting and anxious mothers their first intimation of the truant's return, even before the approaching figures could be recognized in the cold, starry brightness of those autumn nights.



1868

CHAPTER XXVIII.

RECOLLECTIONS OF A PRIVATE SCHOOL.

DURING the five years terminating with the spring of 1868, I attended but two schools in all that period and as before stated Miss Sullivan was my only teacher.

Commencing my school life under the tuition of this lady in 1863, at the old District School, I also attended the private school at her Dietz street residence in the middle part of 1864; returned with her to the public school toward the end of the same year; was one of her pupils upon the resumption of the Dietz street school in 1865, and there remained until the end of my private school life in Oneonta.

In 1864 the Dietz street school was conducted in an upper front room; in 1865 and the years following, on the first floor.

Besides the text-books of the District School, we studied Clark's Grammar and, I think, Richardson's History of the United States.

During the first winter term (1865-1866) of the Dietz street school, the writer occupied a seat in the southerly front room; the next winter a desk in the

northerly front room, and during the last year there, he sat in the little back room.

The second of the above rooms contained a row of desks along the Dietz street front, while the little rear room had two desks located at the back part of the same, one on either side of the window. In this last room was also a movable black-board resting on two legs.

During my last term at this school the other occupants of the rear room besides the writer were Fred Shaw, Alpheus Sabin and Eugene Parr. We looked upon the location of our seats with much favor for they were in a room which placed us apart from the rest of the school by ourselves alone, although more or less within view of our teacher, who had her seat in the adjoining apartment.

The principal amusement of the boys during recess in the summer time was ball, either played as "one old cat," or "two old cat."

About 1866 there was the deserted shell of an old house two or three doors above our school, on the same side of the street and which the boys frequented more or less. In the rear of this building was a sand bank where we also used to play.

In the winter season we would either snowball each other or play in the great snow banks on the hill slope in the rear of the house.

Our teacher kept bees in the back yard of her residence and, sometimes, when certain of her pupils had been particularly well-behaved, they were more than rewarded by receiving some of the delicious honey to take home with them.

In the front yard were arranged several fancy flower beds which, in the springtime, made a display of more than ordinary interest and beauty.

The maple trees which we see along Dietz street to-day were then but mere saplings.

Among fellow pupils toward the close of my school days with Miss Sullivan, I think there were all of the following: O. C. McCrum, Orson A. Miller, Edward D. Lewis, D'Estaing Place, Alfred G. Shaw, Alpheus T. Sabin, Arthur Ford, Morrell Nelson, Eugene S. Parr, Willis Peebles, C. W. Lewis, Nellie Howe, Emma Dunham, Martha Coates, Lulie Ford, Fannie McDonald, Nellie Lewis, Mary Howe, Nellie Ford, Mary Johnston, Louise Elwell and Helen Patterson. A number of other names occur to me, but not being almost certain they were borne by pupils attending the school at that time, I withhold them for fear of making errors.



CHAPTER XXIX.

SPRING TIME.

THE DEPARTURE OF WINTER was always satisfactory to the youthful element of Ontario's population, although its arrival was received with a certain degree of approbation by us at the time, for it brought within its train a long line of sports and recreations that could be furnished by no other season.

Winter was always accompanied however by Jack Frost—an officious, although influential busybody and hanger-on, who, over-estimating the lasting quality of the welcome accorded his master, was inclined to extend the programme to lengths hardly in conformity with popular sentiment as the season advanced and their visit became prolonged.

Presently, however, old Sol, warming up with compassion for imprisoned Nature, would begin to dissolve her fetters, and elbow the unwelcome guests into more appropriate quarters.

Simultaneously the sap in the trees would feel a quickening in sympathy with the new conditions, and preparations would straightway be commenced

by various thrifty people for the annual robbing of the sugar-maple.

When George W. Fairchild and the writer were each twelve or thirteen years old they had a "sap bush" in the woods near the summit of the Normal School hill and about on a line with Dietz street. They did not conduct this bush for a long time however.

One of the most cheerful and pleasing sounds of springtime was the opening chorus emanating from the dark precincts of the frog pond in the early part of the evening.

The coming of the swallows was likewise an eventful day to me, for there was always a great colony of them that came every year and took up their mud nest quarters under the easterly eaves of our larger barn. Many who were village boys at that time will remember them.

In the same barn we had a granary whose only light was admitted by means of a square-shaped hole in the side of the building and directly under the nests of the eaves swallows. Every Spring there was one solitary pair of chimney swallows that had a nest of sticks glued to one of the walls of this granary.

Among our favorite amusements in the same season of the year were kite-flying, duck-on-the-rock, barn-ball, and bonfires in the evening.

Small boys of seven or eight years of age would

carry on a great rivalry in the gathering of pins, shortly after the melting of the snows, scanning carefully the old wooden sidewalks, likewise the sweepings thrown out in the rear of the ancient frame stores on the southerly side of Main street. Sometimes in the latter quarter an industrious urchin striving to gather the largest number of pins would be made happy in finding a "shin-plaster," as a sample of the fractional paper circulating medium which the Government called money was then denominated.

Older boys and girls, upon the drying of the earth, would range the slopes near the village in search of early wild flowers and a favorite place to look for them was beyond the summit of the ridge situated between the hill road to Laurens and the Babcock Hollow road. This was on my father's land and I remember at the extreme back end of his most remote field from the village and close to the woods there was in a secluded hollow the remnants of a house deserted many years ago. Near its broken and tumbled-down foundation walls was a large spring of cold, pure water which often quenched the thirst of the writer in his boyhood. The name of the last family that occupied this lonely dwelling was Kimball and they moved away very early in my recollection.

Another popular excursion was to The Rocks. In those days distinguishing appellations were

applied to them such as Table Rock, Name Rock, Prospect Rock etc.

In a dry crevice of one of these rocks I remember once finding several cards dated five years before and bearing the names of Ada Ford, M. Leonora Huntington, Amelia Cooke and one or two other mutual girl friends.

Name Rock, however, carried more permanent memorials in sundry names deeply chiseled in its surface—some antedating the Rebellion.

There was one name there which was always regarded with mournful interest—that of Elvin D. Farmer. Entering the Northern Army at an early period, his subsequent fate was locked up in the mysteries of the war.

He was one of the many who died for their country in the springtime of life.



CHAPTER XXX.

STORY OF A BOTTLE OF ELDERBERRY WINE.

IN THE FALL SEASON OF 1868, Richard Cooper, a playmate of mine who lived in our house at the foot of the orchard hill, gathered a quantity of elderberries and, after squeezing therefrom the juice, united with it certain other necessary concomitants and putting the product in a sealed bottle placed the same on an out-of-the-way shelf in the house where he lived.

This proceeding was finished with a satisfied feeling that the way was now well prepared for a treat upon some future occasion and already he anticipated the taste of his elderberry wine.

Now Dick's uncle Jack was a humorous man and always felt a certain pleasure in teasing his nephew. Moreover he was not a stranger to the exact location of the wine but a very little while after it had been temporarily placed on the out-of-the-way shelf.

In the fullness of time, which arrived on a certain day when Dick and the writer were playing together in our barn, he let me into the secret of his treasure

and generously proposed that we go and test the quality of the same. So, with minds full of pleasant anticipation, we repaired to his home.

But as Fate unkindly ordained, Dick's invitation to me in the barn had been overheard by the afore-said relative, who hastened away in advance without having been seen by us.


Upon arriving at the house the first sight that met our bewildered gaze upon entering was the same uncle Jack with an aggravating smile on his face, seated at a small table in the middle of the room and upon the table was a filled tumbler flanked by the partly-emptied bottle of elderberry wine.

The reader can now readily imagine the scene that followed, about equally mixed with poor Richard's consternation, anger, grief and dismay. Although the wine had not been tasted and eventually we had it entirely to ourselves, my friend's glowing pride of ownership could not have been more sadly injured had he found nothing but the dregs of the emptied bottle.



CHAPTER XXXI.

POPULAR GATHERINGS.

 ONEONTA, when a very small village, was famous for drawing greater numbers of people to her public entertainments, whatsoever their character, than any other place in her section of the State. Not that the means she furnished for interesting the stranger within her gates were more attractive or extensive in their scope ; not that the neighboring agricultural people were more willing to spend their money for personal gratification, and not that her whisky was any better or worse as, perhaps, some malicious people maintained. The true reason was the same that I referred to in the beginning of this book and that was to the effect that, owing to the peculiar topography of the surrounding country, it was the natural center of a large section of the State.

It seems to me that those great crowds of old were a pretty safe indication of the truth of the statement which her more far-seeing business men made and maintained when they said, "Oneonta is the coming town."

The observance of certain public holidays with us during that period, seemed hardly complete without the martial music of the West Oneonta Band; and where was there any music more soul-inspiring to any true American than the sound of the drum and the fife, as we heard it from those "country musicians?"

What the bagpipes of Scotland did for the crumbling squares at Waterloo, the drum and the fife did for our ancestors under Putnam and Stark, when they not only successfully met the onslaught of their oppressors, but were enabled to send that triumphant shout into the recoiling ranks of the foemen: "The Yankees are cowards, are they?"

* * * * *

Four great events were there often contained in one year's history of our little town, each of which rarely failed to pack the streets with the assembled multitude of people, often drawn in part from sections as remote as Burlington, Delhi, Unadilla, Worcester and Stamford.

Those conspicuous occasions were, the Fourth of July, General Training and Political Meetings, all of which were supposed to appeal to our patriotism; also Circus Day, where love of country was not so much inclined to assert itself.

The Fourth of July and Circus Day used to suit me best and I fancy there were few American boys who would have said to the contrary.

Fourth of July was ushered in with a salute at sunrise from the old brass six-pounder, which every old Oneonta boy remembers. From the top of Barn Hill by the Mill Pond, where the firing took place, the report would awaken the echoes of the distant hills and bring sleeping boys to a speedy realization of their duty to their country and to themselves as well.

A little later on in the day, the noisy firecracker and humble little torpedo would do their best to keep alive the memory of the first Fourth of July.

Still later, the now thoroughly enthused people would perhaps repair to Walling's Grove and listen to the more intellectual features of the day.

Along in the afternoon, the Militia and Volunteer Firemen would sometimes parade, followed by the "Grotesques and Horribles," hideous in their masks and arousing the lively consternation of the small boy.

In the evening, we usually had public fireworks at the foot of Chestnut street, and I am sure I have never seen fireworks since that afforded so much pleasure to me as Oneonta's display of the same in the olden time.

The coming of a circus was a great event, which we enjoyed somewhat by anticipation as well. Several weeks before the "greatest show on earth" would reach town, enormous posters, in brilliant-colored pictures and letters, would be pasted on the

old Chestnut street hotel barns, announcing the pleasure and instruction in store for the people upon the arrival of these great aggregations of everything that could reasonably be asked for to contribute to their happiness.

Circusmen, as a rule, were rather partial to certain vacant lands of my father's as desirable places for pitching their tents. These fields were usually on one side or the other of Church street, between High street and where is now Cherry street, and comparatively close to the center of the village.

A circus in those days was usually transported from town to town by means of horses and wagons, and upon its approach to Oneonta many of the boys would meet it on the outskirts of the village and act as a volunteer escort through the crowded, principal streets to the sound of the music until the circus grounds were reached, where a small city of canvas presently grew up like magic.

Among the names of circus proprietors visiting Oneonta about this period I remember Dan Rice, De Mott & Ward, Stone Rosston & Murray, O'Brien, Van Amburgh, etc.

Circuses then, with all their traveling adjuncts, were much the same as we see them to-day, so any extended description in this place is hardly necessary.

The morning following the departure of a circus from town, some of the boys used to visit the

vacated ground at an early hour and occasionally were fortunate enough to find money thereon of small denomination.

Political meetings, especially in the Presidential campaigns, were looked upon with approbation by the boys of town and particularly so if, when held in the evening, they were preceded by torchlight processions.

The erection of liberty-poles was considered an important feature in the national political contests, and a point on the southerly side of Main street, about opposite the Chestnut street corner of the Susquehanna House, was usually selected by the Republicans as the most desirable location for their pole. Here stood a pole in 1864 and just prior to the election of 1868 a new one was erected about 125 feet high.

The village boys took great interest in the latter election and ranged themselves upon opposite sides of the political fence in conformity with the views and predilections of their respective sires.

Different sections of the village supported smaller poles erected through the zeal of the juvenile element. In my neighborhood the boys put up a Grant and Colfax pole about fifty feet high, located on Church street near High about opposite the old Methodist parsonage. Willis Peebles and Eugene Alton figured conspicuously in this little side move-

ment, showing conclusively that even the small boys were awake to the perils of their country.

The Republicans of Oneonta in those days had the greatest number of liberty poles, but they lacked in the enthusiasm—whether real or artificial—and the local oratory as well, which our Democratic friends always had in abundance.

Oneonta's political leaders of 1868 have now mostly passed away and all will unite with me in saying, "Peace to their ashes."



CHAPTER XXXII.

EARLY EXPERIENCES AND IMPRESSIONS

PART IV.

I THINK IT WAS IN THE SPRING of 1866, I had my first, and only, practical experience in military life.

This opportunity afforded the juvenile portion of town for indulging its martial tastes was through the instrumentality of our well-known citizen General S. S. Burnside.

The General conceived the idea that there was a sad waste of good material in the younger generation of Oneonta who were growing up from boyhood without being trained in the glorious pursuits of war. The boys thought so too and within a very short time after this mutual understanding was reached the General had secured a supply of muskets from the State and was instructing us in the manual of arms and training us in military tactics.

I think there were about twenty-five boys in the company ranging from ten to sixteen years of age.

The writer was one of the youngest members and had about all he wanted to do to lift his musket.

We usually trained in Military Hall, nearly opposite the junction of Main and Broad streets, and I believe did not survive the season as an organization.

The public amusements of Oneonta in those days were limited in a considerable degree to home talent. Among the few traveling troupes, however, that did semi-occasionally visit us will be remembered the names of Signor Blitz, Peak Family of Swiss Bell Ringers and Barker Family of Singers. A glass blowing genius would sometimes favor Oneonta with an exhibition of his skill and a chance to buy his handiwork.

There was another class of traveling people we saw a great deal of in 1866, who also claimed to be public benefactors in a more practical way. I refer to the lightning rod men who captured, with their blandishments, a large number of our people.

I think it was in the fall of the same year that squirrels were so numerous in the village trees.

About this period, we had a city boy attending school in Oneonta in the person of Eddie Raun, who lived at the house of Silas Sullivan, Mrs. Sullivan being his aunt. Eddie was a popular boy and is just as popular as a man in my present home, San Francisco, where I often see him.

About the first of June, 1867, I visited relatives in Saratoga County, also others living on Jay street in Schenectady. While at the latter place I received a letter from my mother, announcing the death of Robert W. Hopkins.

In the spring of 1868, Charlie Pardee and Richard Cooper, playmates of mine, secured two young foxes of a man living near the toll gate, one mile east of Oneonta on the road to Emmons. These little quadrupeds attracted much attention among the village boys. Charlie kept his fox at his home on the corner of Academy and Grove streets, while Richard's fox was kept tied to an old stump in Father's lower orchard.

Croquet was introduced in Oneonta about this time and soon claimed many devotees among both old and young. The first game of croquet I ever played was with the Alton children in their yard on the corner of Chestnut and Church streets.

Oneonta boys used to go swimming very often in the summer of 1868 at The Flume or The Dam and it was a common thing when the bathers left the water to be saluted with the cry of "chew raw beef." None of us failed to appreciate in a practical way the perverted meaning of this phrase when it came to untying knots in our shirt sleeves with our teeth.

The writer on another occasion, as a matter of accommodation to a farmer, stepped into a harness shop on Main street and inquired for "some strap

oil." He very soon afterwards knew what that meant too.

About this time Oneonta received additions to its business men in the coming of the following new citizens: Messrs. Edwards and Liddle, who succeeded G. Z. Sanders in the hardware business, H. M. Tobey, A. B. Tobey, Mr. Myers, A. C. Moody E. D. Saunders, A. R. Dutton, C. E. Bunn, Mr. Siple, E. J. Morgan, M. D., J. H. Keyes, J. Cohn, L. Hathaway, W. W. Alton, D. W. Ford, R. L. Fox, C. W. Bixby, C. D. Pope, H. N. Rowe, etc.

It was about this period also, that Professor Fowler made a temporary stay in town in order to instruct the rising generation in penmanship.

In the early part of the summer of 1868 I accompanied my uncle, C. P. Huntington, to New York for a little visit and returning via North River steamer, Schenectady, Saratoga County and Watervliet, reached home about the Fourth of July not without a bountiful supply of firecrackers. I gave some of them to Richard Cooper, thereby winning very pleasant encomiums from his family.

One evening in the fall of 1868 Oneonta witnessed a beautiful meteoric shower which was the sensation of the season.

This was the same period when Oneonta ladies wore waterfalls and the Grecian Bend was a common spectacle in the land. Dolly Vardens and velocipedes made their appearance not long afterwards. Lyman Blend can testify as to the latter.

E. C. Bundy's confectionery store was uncommonly attractive to the young people. James Roberts' store too, was not without a good stock of candy and I remember on one occasion about this time, Colonel Snow invited a number of lads into the latter place and bought them a liberal amount of stick candy and Jackson balls ; not necessarily the latter, however, because the Colonel happened to be a Democrat.

Doctor David T. Evans in those days used to be seen sitting more or less in E. C. Bundy's store. Old and young alike enjoyed his funny stories. The aged doctor lived pretty well up toward the century mark and I think never failed in his old age to celebrate each successive birthday by jumping up in the air and striking his feet twice together before getting back to the floor.

Then, as well as now, the town had its popular songs, but "Captain Jinks" undoubtedly took precedence with perhaps "Pretty little Sarah" as second.

Among familiar places of this period many people will remember the old joint office and bar-room (the latter on a six inch lower floor) of the Oneonta House and the steel engraving therein, entitled "The Trapper's last Shot."

Another familiar place was the old postoffice on the first floor of the same building now occupied in part by A. G. Shaw, Esq., as an office.

Near the rear end of the waiting-room of this post-office was an old counter reaching nearly across the apartment, behind which the space was occupied by an old and respected citizen as a shoe shop.

On this counter was kept a large brown jug—of water, while on the southerly wall of the room were hung historical pictures (in the interest of various insurance companies) of “Washington crossing the Delaware,” and “Putnam leaving the Plow” upon receiving the news from Concord and Lexington.

Then there was the long black patent-leather covered bench underneath the pictures.

Sometimes I would be invited in behind the boxes while my companion, Arthur Sullivan, assisted his father in distributing the mail.

That was the nearest I ever found myself to a Government position.



CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE OLD CHURCHES.

FROM MY EARLIEST BOYHOOD there had been four church edifices in Oneonta village, all of them being small frame structures.

The Baptist and Presbyterian steeples alone contained bells, and the preparations and time of departure from home of the people of all denominations destined for regular morning and evening religious service were governed by these two bells.

The Presbyterian lads, of whom the writer was one, congratulated themselves that their bell was the larger and more mellow sounding of the two.

Like most children I was not very partial to church service but, for my compulsory sitting through the same, found compensating elements in the Sunday school immediately following.

Miss Annie Osborn was my first Sunday school teacher and oftentimes she made the members of her class happy recipients of pretty little Sunday school cards.

Afterwards I was a member of Mr. Johnston's class and finally belonged to Mr. Osborn's.

Our Sunday school song books at different times in my childhood were the "Golden Censer," "Fresh Laurels" and "Bright Jewels."

Each class was known by some term applied to it from Bible selections. Thus, for illustration, one class was called the Peacemakers and another, the Daughters of Zion. Four times a year we would have concerts comprising singing, recitation of verses from the scriptures, etc.

An event of uncommon interest to the young people was a Sunday school picnic. Sometimes all the Sunday schools in the village would participate in a joint picnic some miles out of town necessitating, of course, the use of conveyances.

The first picnic of this kind I remember, was held several miles up the Oneonta creek road.

About 1866 the Sunday schools had a joint picnic in a grove on the west bank of the Otego creek about one mile above West Oneonta.

The auditory of the old Presbyterian church supported by means of short pillars of wood a gallery on the two sides and rear end of the service room, while the front end was taken up in a great degree by the pulpit with a row of short pews on either side, facing the same.

That portion of the gallery located opposite the pulpit, contained the organ and choir, while the side galleries were for the use of visitors in case the downstairs seats were all occupied.

At each rear corner of the main floor of the service room was a stove for burning wood and so hot would these corners sometimes become that the white paint on the neighboring woodwork in many places had raised in blisters.

Although the stoves made a great heat it was, in very cold weather, more or less local in its influence and old people would accordingly at times take the precaution to bring to church with them, their foot-stoves.

Between the ceiling and the roof of this church was a great dark unfinished place, always occupied by a colony of bats. During Sunday evening services, in the summer time, these unpleasant creatures, attracted by the lights, would flock into the room and draw more or less attention to their gyrations which were circumscribed only by the limits of the place.

The different churches in order to help sustain their local organizations would have ice cream and strawberry festivals, (in their respective seasons) donations, mite societies and bazaars.

During the holidays the children would be made happy by Christmas trees and New Year's baskets at the various places of worship.

Relative to the pastors of this period the names of Van Dusen, Baldwin, Phelps, Smith, Peebles, Wales, Reynolds and Crowell will be remembered by many of my readers.

Regarding the more venerable laymen they will recall to mind the names of E. R. Ford, Elisha Shepherd, Hezekiah Watkins, David T. Clark and perhaps some others I do not think of at the moment of writing.

About this time the religious people of the village after a rather dormant period began to feel an awakened interest in their church affairs, both spiritual and temporal.

The Methodists took steps that led to the building of a new church edifice while the two Baptist and Presbyterian organizations remodelled and otherwise improved their sanctuaries. The Free Will Baptists and Methodists also added bells to their steeples, the bell of the former being the largest one in town.

The various churches were likewise fitted up with furnaces and registers for heating purposes—the first I had seen in Oneonta.

During the winter of 1868–1869 the Presbyterians had services temporarily on the upper floor of the Bissell Block, an apartment then known as Music Hall. Immediately following the completion of the work in the following spring upon their church building, a new organ having been added, the Rev. H. H. Allen commenced with the Presbyterians his long, faithful and satisfactory labors.

There is but little left now of those old sacred edifices but the bells, which are still performing their vocation in the same tones, we used to hear a generation ago.

1869

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CRAVINGS FOR ADVENTURE.

TOWARD THE END of the winter of 1866-1867, upon returning home from the Dietz-street school at the close of the day I would sometimes stop at the tenement house below our barn and pay my respects to a family living on the upper floor.

It was my fortune during one of these visits to find among other books belonging to the lady of the house a copy of one of a "highwayman series" of stories.

This book was enclosed in a paper cover of brilliant coloring and I found upon perusal that the little volume purported to give an accurate account of sundry famous episodes in the lives of Richard Turpin, Claude Duval and other gentlemen whose names are conspicuous in English history.

From this same memorable day in which I took my first readings in lively fiction, life for a period assumed an entirely different phase and seemed cramped and circumscribed as I found it in Oneonta.

It was not many months afterwards, however, before I lost interest in the Jesuitical plots appertaining to the fortunes of the house of Stuart in which Claude and Richard were alleged to have been factors and of the remarkable experiences of the two gentlemen as confined more particularly to their precarious calling. I found that our own country presented a field that had been utilized by sundry historians in a manner convincing to me that America possessed heroes compared with whose exploits the deeds of England's greatest men sank into comparative insignificance.

Such men as Eagle-eyed Zeke, Nick of the Woods and Rattlesnake-Dick were the heroes of the hour, and I found that the exalted opinion the writer had formed of these men, who were so singularly unostentatious in all that pertained to the little conventionalities of civilized life, was fully approved in the judgment of his boy companions.

The ordinary humdrum character of everyday life now began to seem tame and commonplace to many of the village boys who, like the writer, felt a desire for startling adventure and born of this spirit were two phases of my early career ; one being an ambition to explore the neighboring forests and streams while the other was a desire for literary fame as a writer of Indian stories.

Now these cravings were both shared in by E. D. Lewis, a boy a little older than the writer and, by

means of a boat fortunately possessed by him, he had, I learned subsequently, carried out the first impulse by making a complete exploration of the whole shore line of the mill pond, eventually extending his travels to a section of the Susquehanna River near the old red-covered bridge.

Relative to the ambition for literary distinction, we made a mutual attempt to gratify it, but regarding this, I will attempt to give the reader our experience a little later on in this narrative.

Although the march of time had swept out of existence the aboriginal occupants of Oneonta's beautiful valley and left our generation unexposed to the assaults of the ruthless red man, quite a portion of the boy element of my native town was not disposed to accept this unsatisfactory condition of things without some murmurings over our unhappy destiny.

If the distinction was denied us of being contemporaries and neighbors of the ancient Tuscaroras and Delawares and exposed to the terrible dangers and vicissitudes of frontier life, we concluded in some degree to cultivate their dress and leading characteristics of speech and manner, while to gratify our tastes for warfare, if we were denied actual foemen we made up our minds to improvise a few imaginary ones.

Such progress was made in carrying out some of these ideas that several public exhibitions were

soon after given by the boys in the old Oneonta House barn, in which some of the prominent actors were decked out in much of the paraphernalia and feathers, supposed to be essential to an Indian on the warpath.

But it dawned upon us that the walls of a barn were not the most appropriate suggestions of what were expected in the way of natural surroundings for a red warrior, whether he be within the limits of his wigwam or bounding along in the pleasures of the chase. We accordingly concluded to widen our field of operations.

In furtherance of this new idea, it was but shortly afterwards that some of my companions had erected huts either in the swamp west of the Watkins' flat or on the wooded slopes in the vicinity of the village.

This was late in the fall of the year and where Cherry street now is, my father had a hop yard, the poles of which were stacked for the winter around two walnut trees, making hollow, cone-shaped objects, in appearance not unlike the traditional habitations of our noble predecessors.

I suggested to some of my friends the advisability of taking possession of these, but was overruled on account of their proximity to the haunts of man.

The boys in the eastern part of town under the leadership of W. E. Yager I think, about this time actuated by the same spirit, took possession of a

section of country bordering on the Oneonta creek and beyond the extreme northern outskirts of the village. Upon this latter ground some skirmishing occurred shortly afterwards between the two rival factions unattended, however, by any loss of life.

Now we come to the literary phase before referred to. Indian stories during this period were read in school hours behind the atlas of almost every boy of a certain age, but nothing in the way of literature of this character had ever emanated from a local pen. This was an opportunity which E. D. Lewis and the writer concluded to take advantage of, with the assistance of Albert Marble.

The latter boy was somewhat older than ourselves and was popularly believed to possess considerable erudition in the bright particular literary field we were partial to.

To add spurs to our new ambition, Editor G. W. Reynolds of the *Herald* promised to publish our story—if it was a good one.

We accordingly secured pen and ink, supplemented by a large quantity of writing paper and betook ourselves to the supposed privacy of a sleeping-room in the old Oneonta House.

I do not remember much of the details of this intellectual attempt. I do recollect, however, that we had pretty much exhausted our intellectual resources with the death of the leading Indian in the middle

of the first chapter, when the small scope remaining to our imagination was abruptly dissipated by a burst of sarcastic laughter from Charlie Lewis, who had, to our astonishment and dismay, witnessed the whole scene from the empty stovepipe hole overhead.



1870

CHAPTER XXXV.

EARLY EXPERIENCES AND IMPRESSIONS

PART V.

A VERY POPULAR STORY WRITER for boys and girls in my younger days was William T. Adams, under the *nom de plume* of Oliver Optic, and I remember with what anticipation we looked forward to the appearance of his periodical which usually, if not always, contained a fine continued story from his pen.

During the year 1869 and the first half of 1870, several boy companions and the writer took great interest in the study of Natural History and gathered many specimens of various kinds, also Indian relics as well.

An interesting locality, among numerous others, in the vicinity of Oneonta, to search for the latter was a place on father's farm called The Old Indian Field. This narrow lot was situated between two pieces of woods at the top of the first hill north of the village and upon a line with Dietz street. The woods referred to have, in recent times, been mostly cut away.

W. E. Yager has preserved for over twenty years some portions of his collections made at the time of which I write, the most interesting relics of which are comprised in a case of butterflies and moths, many of which still retain much of their old-time brightness of color.

On the eighth day of January, 1870, I went to New York in company with my father. The following two months I was at the house of my uncle, C. P. Huntington, much of the time, his residence being located at 65 Park avenue in that city.

While there I attended school at Doctor Hull's Murray Hill Institute.

I remember on the eve of Saint Valentine's day, I participated with sundry boys of the neighborhood in delivering valentines at different houses.

About the same time I likewise visited my relatives, I. E. Gates and wife who were then living at Elizabeth, New Jersey.

Shortly afterwards I witnessed in New York a rendition of Shakespearean tragedy for the first time in my life. It was Hamlet with Edwin Booth in the title role.

One afternoon toward the close of winter, C. P. Huntington's house caught fire, but the flames were extinguished before much damage had been done.

I returned home via Cohoes, reaching Oneonta about the middle of March.

Shortly after my return, a terrible accident occurred between the depot and The Dam, resulting in the death of a young woman who was employed in the household of D. W. Ford. She was run over and horribly mutilated by the cars.

At the time of the above accident snow was on the ground and the neighboring streams were more or less covered with ice, although we were then advancing well along into spring.

About this period I was the proud possessor of a pair of club skates and a pistol. The latter was a mischievous little weapon and I suppose I may consider myself fortunate in not having been shot by it.

A little later in the season, Clarence Spaulding and the writer set a night line in the waters of The Dam, but I don't think we caught any fish.

The village boys, at this time, nearly all bore nicknames.


Among the employes of my father about this period were Clinton Barnes, Lucius Hummel, Peter Milo Marble, Tanner Evans, George Madison, A. J. Cooper, Chas. Cornwell, Robert Palmer, W. Snow, Ezra Roe, George Roe, Silas Parish, Willis Wellman, Henry A. Wise, Elias Eckler, Alfred Jacobs, John Dimon, Henry Dibble, Henry Bennett, Peter Van Valkenburg, — Angel and David Alger.

We now come to the end of the miscellaneous information which the writer desired to preserve in this series of papers.

1870

CHAPTER XXXVI.

FIRST TRIP TO NEW LISBON.

ARLY IN THE AFTERNOON of April 16th, 1870, father and I started for the town of New Lisbon, to visit there a farm that had recently come into our possession.

The sky was rather cloudy, and the roads being in good condition, we traveled along very comfortably.

Father led the way with a two-horse team, while I kept close behind him with a horse and buggy.

This occasion presented my first opportunity for seeing the Otego creek valley, and the village of Laurens.

The latter had formerly been known as Craftstown, being so called in honor of an early resident and General in the old State Militia, who had been gathered to the pioneer fathers some twenty years before the time of our visit.

I was impressed by the old style appearance of some of the houses, facing the quiet main street. Great trees here sheltered from the rays of the summer sun the beaten paths which answered for the sidewalks.

Few people did we see in the principal thoroughfare, however, for Laurens was not the busy town which had formerly flourished here. Business had forsaken it, in a great degree, and entered other channels adjusting itself to the new conditions brought about by the building of the railroad through an adjoining line of towns.

In former days there had been quite a large number of Quakers living in this vicinity and they had been able to sustain a church organization and meeting house as well, for some years. The latter was located on the outskirts of Laurens village, near the West Oneonta road. Sometimes, upon meeting for worship, if the Spirit failed to move them the Quakers would simply shake hands all around and solemnly disperse without any further public observance of the day.

From Laurens we followed up the road on the west side of the Otego creek.

We passed Mount Vision, located a little to our right and diverged from the road that follows the main stream of the Otego.

After ascending quite a high hill we crossed a wooden bridge built over a brook, which was tumbling down its rocky bed far beneath. This place was called Fall Bridge, and during a certain period, many years before the date of our visit, there had been a postoffice located near where is now situated the schoolhouse, a little south of the bridge.

At that time the people of Mount Vision had no postoffice nearer than this point.

Far back in the century there were said to be only two men in the northern part of the town of Laurens but who were Democrats, hence the appellation of Jacksonville, which was applied to and borne by Mount Vision for so many years and even to the present day to a considerable extent.

From Fall Bridge father and I saw our destination in the distance, located about a mile northwardly, in the valley of the West Branch of the Otego. Upon arriving at our farm it was nearly night.

The house was a wood colored structure, located below the highway and on the bank of the creek. A short lane extended down to it from the road. It was a very old building and in its earlier days had been used as a hotel. Its dimensions were quite great, the main portion being two stories high with an addition of one story extending back. At each end of the main part of the building was an immense chimney with fire places down stairs.

The first floor of the front part comprised, besides a great hallway with stairs leading upwards, a large room on either side. The upstairs part was divided by a partition into two great rooms also.

The house faced toward the south, and had been quite pretentious in its day, no doubt.

Under the front eaves was a wide board reaching from one end of the structure to the other. This board was nailed to the house just above the clapboards, and upon its smooth surface had been glued or tacked little pieces of wood, intended to convey to the eyes of the beholder an ornamental effect. Thus did the pioneers not aim exclusively to create an effect strictly useful in a practical sense, but in an humble way, were willing to add to it a little touch that should contribute to the gratification of an artistic longing which, we see, was not entirely dormant with them at that early day.

The man who occupied the house at the time I made this first visit, bore the name of Joshua Roe, and his family comprised, besides himself and wife, two children, one named Nattie, being a boy six or seven years of age, while the youngest was a baby girl named Ina.

The farm seemed to be rather out of the way of much public travel, and to my youthful mind, arriving there in the early gloom of night as we did, our surroundings were not satisfactory. The location seemed uncanny and the effect was fully communicated to the great mysterious house. At that time I had never seen Joshua before.

After supper in the great east room of the first floor we retired to an upper chamber, and I expressed some apprehensions to my father relative to our personal safety under the same roof with this man,

who to me was a stranger and his character quite an enigma.

It is not necessary to say, however, that we passed through the night in safety.

The next morning before departing for Oneonta little Nattie Roe gave me a kingfisher's egg which he had found in a nest located in the bank of the creek just below the house. I was glad to add this egg to my collection.

Father left with Mr. Roe the team he drove up, and after breakfast we started for Oneonta in our buggy, reaching home the same day.



1870

CHAPTER XXXVII.

IN THE GRADED SCHOOL

IN THE EARLY PART OF THE SPRING of 1868, I left the private school of Miss Sullivan on Dietz street and entered the graded school.

The latter had been recently established in the old district schoolhouse under the principalship of Wilbur F. Saxton and in the mean time work was progressing upon the new Union School building, located on Academy street.

My last attendance at the old Grove street school was for but one term, upon the conclusion of which its doors as appertaining to an educational resort were closed forever.

On the 26th day of October, 1868, the first term of school in the new building commenced and I had the honor of participating as a pupil upon that opening day.

I was assigned a desk in the Intermediate Department, Miss Mary C. Vergeson teacher. My school number this first term was 11, while my seat mate, E. E. Carpenter, bore the number 12.

Upon the opening of the second term on February 1, 1869, I was promoted to a seat upstairs in the room of Mr. Saxton, the principal, and my new number was 5.

I attended school all of the third term, commencing April 7, 1869, as well as all of the two terms preceding; all of the fourth term commencing September 1, 1869; the first five days only of the winter term commencing December 13, 1869, while of the sixth term which commenced April 4, 1870, I attended from Tuesday April 12th until Tuesday May 17th, both days inclusive.

The following is a list of pupils comprising all who received tuition with me during the period that Mr. Saxton was principal and the writer was a pupil in the new building of the Oneonta Union Free School, Commencing October 26, 1868.

PRIMARY DEPARTMENT.

MISS LIZZIE WING, TEACHER.

Term Commencing October 26, 1868.

NO.	NAMES	NO.	NAMES
1	Ellen Morenus	7	Flora Strait
2	Louisa Converse	8	Frank Strait
3	Carrie Huntington	9	Josephine Alger
4	Blanche Villos	10	Ida Manchester
5	Ellen Spencer	11	Lizzie Jones
6	Jennie Ingalls	12	Margaret Jones

PRIMARY DEPARTMENT.—*Continued.*

NO.	NAMES	NO.	NAMES
13	Flora Vanderburg	38	Elmer Coates
14	Hattie Wickham	39	Hattie Bennett
15	Helen Brewer	40	Lelia Doolittle
16	Louisa Alton	41	Laverne Doolittle
17	May Peebles	42	Wesley Smith
18	George Peebles	43	Clarence Wetsel
19	Lottie Bissell	44	Clara Pope
20	Louis Cohn	45	Cora Pope
21	Gould Marble	46	Minnie Pratt
22	William Maloney	47	Mary White
23	James Maloney	48	Ada Ford
24	Wm. Vanderburg	49	Willie Fairchild
25	Floyd Harrington	50	David Alger
26	George Long	51	Edward Alger
27	Henry Long	52	Alice White
28	Charlie Burgin	53	Hattie White
29	Sherman Reynolds	54	Henry Driggs
30	Robert Hopkins	55	Ella Garvin
31	Charlie Farmer	56	Katie Hynes
32	Charlie Fairechild	57	Florence Wood
33	Virgil Barnes	58	Avis Youngs
34	Frank Bissell	59	Robert Keenan
35	Elmer Howe	60	Frank Briggs
36	Debois Hasbrooke	61	Irving Briggs
37	Egbert Hasbrooke	62	Georgie France
	63	Lottie France	

INTERMEDIATE DEPARTMENT.

MISS MARY C. VERGESON, TEACHER.

Term Commencing Oct. 26, 1868.

NO.	NAMES	NO.	NAMES
1	Willie Ingold	1	Melissa Gault
2	John Brewer	2	Ettie Carr
3	Jerome Fuller	3	Helen Patterson
4	Michael Maloney	4	Louise Elwell
5	Howard Farmer	5	Lizzie Myers
6	Richard Cooper	6	Alice Beach
7	Arthur Ford	7	Ella Harper
8	Willie Morris	8	Martha Coates
9	Eddie Barnes	9	Lulie Ford
10	El Dorr Van Wœrt	10	Fannie McDonald
11	Willie Huntington	11	Mary Johnston
12	Eddie Carpenter	12	Nellie Ford
13	Reed Saunders	13	Mary Reynolds
14	Freddie Whitecomb	14	Flora Jacobs
15	Charles Pardee	15	Florence Bassett
16	Charles Lewis	16	Estella Hemstreet
17	Frank Pardee	17	Ida Parker
18	Howard Wickham	18	Marion Beach
19	Fred Spencer	19	Leanna Hubbard
20	Ambrose Bissell	20	Viola Doolittle
21	Levern Reynolds	21	Kittie McGinley
22	Johnnie Johnston	22	Online Mickel
23	Union Ousterhout	23	Mary Pardee
24	Carr Peck	24	Fannie Cornish
25	James Marble	25	Marcia Doolittle
26	Frank Barnes	26	Amanda Mickel

INTERMEDIATE DEPARTMENT.—*Continued.*

NO.	NAMES	NO.	NAMES
27	Merton Ford	27	Lizzie Swart
28	Morrell Nelson	28	Bertha Newman
29	George Smith	29	Lavanche Hudson
30	Emerson Hasbrooke	30	Emma Bishop
31	Wirt McCrum	31	Nellie Lewis
32	Adelbert Butts	32	Anna Cope
33	Clarence Spaulding	33	Ada Yager
34	Jacob Cornish	34	Adna Brazee
35	Emerald Jewell	35	Mary Swart
36	Charles Miles	36	Anna Beach
37	Frank Miller	37	Jennie Strait
38	Willie Graves	38	Mary Brazee
39	David Rose	39	Ida Brewer
40	Leon Mendel	40	Alice Fairchild
41	Leopold Mendel	41	Rachael Cohn
42	Robbie Jacobs	42	Jennie Fairchild
43	Willie Marble	43	Augusta Hasbrooke
44	James Long	44	Mary Burgin
45	Philo Brewer	45	Jennie Watkins
46	Jackson Couse	46	Alice Brownson
47	Dell Beames	47	Kittie Ramsey
48	Eugene Alton	48	Anna Alton
49	George Jones	49	Ida Sherwood
50	Herman Sherwood	50	Augusta Alger
51	Sylvester Alger		
52	Charles Dye		
53	Millard Briggs		
54	George Winslow		

SENIOR DEPARTMENT.

WILBUR F. SAXTON, TEACHER.

Term Commencing Oct. 26. 1868.

NO.	NAMES	NO.	NAMES
1	Clark McCrum	1	Maggie Bixby
2	Willie Yager	2	Emma F. Gates
3	Charles Baker	3	Lucy Bond
4	Clinton P. Van Woert	4	Nellie Myers
5	Frank Peck	5	Emma M. Birdsall
6	Arthur W. Sullivan	6	Louise J. Sullivan
7	Wm. H. Figger	7	Nettie Wickham
8	Henry Saunders	8	Dora Roberts
9	Orson A. Miller	9	Matie C. Burton
10	Charles Alton	10	Alice Farmer
11	James R. Slade	11	Mary E. Blend
12	Chas. D. Youngman	12	Jennie McDonald
13	Austin C. Sage	13	Kate Sullivan
14	Eugene S. Parr	14	Myra E. Bixby
15	Emery Smith	15	Nellie Howe
16	Wm. H. Shellman	16	Helena Uebel
17	Geo. W. Pardoe	17	Mary Howe
18	John Silvernail	18	Libbie Culver
19	Noble Patterson	19	Anna Hudson
20	Chas. Hasbrooke	20	Viola Tucker
21	Chas. A. Smith	21	Ella Whitcomb
22	Henry Potter	22	Belle Pardoe
23	Fitch Parish	23	Julia Brewer
24	Mathew D. Cornish	24	Phebe Richards
25	Orrin Yager	25	Leona L. Mickel

SENIOR DEPARTMENT.—*Continued.*

NO.	NAMES	NO.	NAMES
26	Ambrose D. Thurston	26	Anna Halsted
27	Geo. W. Ingalls	27	Rachel E. Farmer
28	Albert Marble	28	Alice Yager
29	Edward D. Lewis	29	Hattie Ford
30	Sam. J. W. Reynolds	30	Lou. Furman
31	Alfred G. Shaw	31	Francelia Richards
32	George W. Gates	32	Anna M. Wickham
33	Wm. B. Bissell	33	Hannah Peebles
34	Marvin D. Siple	34	Helen Sullivan
35	George Harper	35	Mary Alton
36	Willis Peebles	36	Hattie Ward
37	Alpheus T. Sabin	37	Mary Mickel
38	Richard Blakely	38	Amanda Smith, Laurens
39	Wm. S. Basinger	39	Nettie Soule, Colliers
40	George Young	40	Helena McCrum
41	Emulus A. Reynolds	41	Hattie E. Jenks
42	Edward B. Pardoe	42	Mary Farrington
43	Oscar Manchester	43	Hannah Strait
		44	Ada Campbell
		45	Julia V. Pattengill, New Lisbon
		46	Florence Eaton, New Lisbon

SUNDRY OTHER "SENIOR" PUPILS OF 1868-1870.

Azro Tyler, Westford	Frank Reynolds
—— Seeley.	Flora Dunham
Leroy Mickel	Emma Dunham
Herbert Van Woert	Lena Brownell
David Wickham	Anna Whitmarsh
Andrew Wickham	Kate Manchester
Geo. H. Barlow	Miss Woodbeck
Quincy Parish	Delia Brewer
Le Grand Parish	Ettie Rowe
Andrew Parish	Ettie Spencer
Bernhard Gross	Ella Whitney
D. W. Chase	Alice Hathaway
Silas Parish	Alice Emmons
Sam'l S. Shepherd	Ida Osterhout
Isaac B. Peet	Amy Barnes
Sam'l N. Ballard	Anna J. Riggs,
Charles Brewer	Cannonsville
Herbert Spencer	Flora Beach
Andrew E. Fagin	Lillie Swart
Chas. N. Cobb	Alice C. Wright
Charles Carl	Martha Slosson
Peter Johnston	Sarah H. Brewer
Perry Blend	Alice Betts
Leonard Beach	Ella Stewart
Harvey Perkins	Agnes Wood

Our school text-books during the same period were :

Sanders' Primer, Sanders' Union First Reader,

Sanders' Union Second Reader, Sanders' Union Third Reader, Sanders' Union Fourth Reader, Sanders' Union Fifth Reader, Thompson's Mental Arithmetic, Thompson's Practical Arithmetic, Davies' Intellectual Arithmetic, Davies' Practical Arithmetic, Robinson's Intellectual Arithmetic, Robinson's Higher Arithmetic, Bullion's Grammar, Monteith's Geography, McNally's Geography, Wilson's U. S. History, Wood's and Gray's Botanies, Little's Philosophy, Little's Astronomy, Robinson's Algebra, Fasquelle's French series, and Harkness' Latin Grammar.

The school building in 1870 comprised but a portion of its present dimensions, large extensions having been added on the north, south and west sides, reducing materially the area of the old play grounds.

The cupola is almost the only portion of the building remaining unchanged.

At the time of the last visit of the writer to Oneonta—in 1890—he went up into the old cupola and found written there, upon the woodwork, names that aroused many recollections of the past, for they were nearly all familiar to his boyhood.

Some of these names are all that we have left of earth pertaining to the writers, save their memories.

Morning and afternoon in those old days, the pupils were called to school by the ringing of the same bell

which is now performing a like service for the present generation.

School would commence each day with exercises, including music and prayer, in the room of the principal and the pupils of all grades were expected to be present and participate in these morning exercises.

The music was furnished at first by a melodeon and eventually by a cabinet organ ; the money with which the latter was purchased having been raised by the industry and enterprise of sundry pupils, I believe.

Either Emma Gates or Mary Farrington, two of the girls attending school, usually acted as organist and most of the assembled students participated in the vocal part of the music. One of the favorite songs, which I partially recall, was a temperance melody, certain lines of which were something like this :

“Pure cold water,
O water give to me ;
For I’m a young abstainer, sir,
From drinking customs, free.”

and upon writing these lines I almost imagine I can see the familiar form and conscientious face of our old principal as he stood on the platform at the conclusion of the brief exercises, with call bell in hand, prepared to strike the signals which dismissed the lower grade pupils to their own apartments.

At recess the boys indulged in some of the school games I have already referred to in previous chapters. They likewise played baseball and practiced on the horizontal bar. The finest strike with the bat I ever saw as a school boy was made by Harvey Perkins and the ball after attaining a great height landed far out in the Watkins' field.

The Spring term of 1870 was memorable for several reasons and among them may be mentioned a walk to the Vlai in which the whole school participated, leaving town in the morning and returning late in the afternoon, carrying our lunch up the mountain with us as a matter of course.

There were two school societies sustained at that time by the older pupils; one entitled "The Pioneers" being conducted by the boys while the other was under the auspices of certain of the girls who called themselves, while in this capacity, the "S. G's."

The list of teachers, besides Mr. Saxton, Miss Vergeson and Miss Wing, included Miss C. J. Rose who had charge of certain classes in an upstairs recitation room.

I think Miss Vergeson and Miss Wing are still living, but Mr. Saxton and Miss Rose died many years ago.

Mr. Saxton was a hardworking, painstaking, conscientious man and although his temper was not always as easily controlled as was perhaps another

person's of less sensitive and nervous organization, his heart was in the right place while his scholarly attainments and intellectual competency were above question.

Miss Rose was always extremely neat in her appearance, dressing modestly and in good taste. I remember she sometimes wore at her throat a small gold and coral pin and occasionally one of some other material and design—I think a mosaic.

Her pupils were fond of Miss Rose and at the same time she maintained good discipline and preserved their respect for her authority.

Although unknown to Fame, the influence of this modest young teacher, for aught we know to the contrary, may be felt by coming generations, long after her mortal frame has returned to its native elements and her spirit has found its ultimate abiding place in the eternal realms.



1870

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

LIFE WITH A COUNTRY PHYSICIAN

IN THE SUMMER OF 1870, I left Oneonta for a visit at the house of E. M. Wade, M. D., of Watervliet, Albany county, New York.

I arrived at Cohoes in the afternoon of the day I left home and stopped there over night at the residence of B. W. Foster, my brother-in-law.

Doctor Wade, as before stated, was an uncle of mine by marriage and resided on the Troy and Schenectady turnpike about five miles from the former city.

From Cohoes I rode with a Shaker as far as the doctor's house. This was on a warm summer day and I remember my sedate appearing friend and traveling companion was not inclined to talk very much on the way.

Arriving at my destination, I met with a very pleasant reception from my relatives who comprised besides the Doctor, my cousins James, Sarah and Annie.

The surface of the country surrounding their home was rather level in character, being only

slightly broken by low lying hills. In the direction of Schoharie county, however, the Helderberg range could be seen looming up prominently.

The soil was of a sandy loam as I remember, being free from the gravelly deposits and rocky formation that I was accustomed to seeing at home.

The next house toward Schenectady from the Doctor's was the old homestead built by his father James Wade, M. D. Between the houses of father and son was located a piece of pine woods, also the family burying ground, the latter being surrounded by a thick evergreen hedge.

Very early in the present century, the two friends—my grandfather, Doctor Saunders and Doctor James Wade had located about twenty miles apart as young physicians in the two adjoining counties of Albany and Saratoga. Their respective professional fields in a physical sense approached each other near Round Lake where the two doctors would sometimes meet each other on their rides and occasionally hold consultations in critical cases.

This friendship extended to the different members of the two families to such a degree that the elder sons of the households studied medicine together. Eventually my grandfather's oldest daughter, Sarah, was married to the senior son of the other house.

Old Doctor Wade was a brother of Senator Ben Wade of Ohio and possessed certain of the latter's determined and indomitable characteristics of mind.

At the time of my visit both my grandfather and his friend had passed away, while the latter's son and successor was in turn advancing considerably beyond the meridian of life.

Doctor E. M. Wade was a man of more than ordinary ability in his profession and had a large ride.

I used to accompany him frequently on his visits to patients as far as his places of destination and while he was inside the houses of the sick I would remain without, holding the horse.

I shall never forget his easy wit, fund of good stories and unselfish character, all of which combined to make him charming company and a popular man, respected and admired by old and young alike.

During this visit my cousin James, several of the sons of a neighbor named Sutliff and the writer would sometimes hitch up a horse to a light spring wagon toward the close of day and drive to the waters of the Mohawk, several miles distant, where we were fond of going in bathing.

The beautiful sunsets of that peaceful valley still shine in memory, through twenty intervening years.



1870.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

LAST DAYS OF BOYHOOD AT HOME.

MY SCHOOL LIFE IN ONEONTA closed forever on Tuesday, May 17th, 1870.

My health was not very good at that period and it was deemed advisable for me to abandon studies for a time.

I was away from home much of the following summer, returning to Oneonta August 31st, greatly improved in a physical sense.

On September 14th, I started for Norwalk, Connecticut, where I passed most of the three following years, in the house and under the tuition of Doctor J. C. Fitch, who conducted a boarding-school for boys.

Before departing from Oneonta, I realized that my boyhood days in the town of my birth were fast drawing to a close; that for me a chapter of life was about to open that would radically differ in some respects from all that had preceded it, as is necessarily the case in the experience of every boy upon first leaving home to take up his abode with strangers.

The impending change had, in one sense, a depressing influence upon my mind; for, although I fully realized that my advantages, in an educational sense, would in all probability be enhanced, I could not, at the same time, contemplate the severance, perhaps permanently, of many ties binding me to home and nearly all the associations I had ever formed in life, without experiencing in advance the pangs of separation.

I participated in the sports of my companions with all the youthful enthusiasm of old ; but in the silent watches of the night, with no artificial and fleeting buoyancy derived in a contagious way from my comrades, to sustain my spirits and prevent my thoughts from turning inward, then would the state of my mind become serious and border on the melancholy.

The outdoor amusements in which I took part, in the early hours of these last evenings of my boyhood in Oneonta, had for their location the grounds surrounding the house of the father of my early childhood friend and companion, Arthur Sullivan ; and the spot which witnessed the termination of the mutual sports of our youth was the same place that beheld their inception ten years before.

Time has so widely separated those play-fellows who used to meet on pleasant evenings in the long ago that only two, out of twelve, remain in the haunts of our childhood. The balance have been

mostly absorbed by the mighty West, and the events that entered into and formed a part of their early lives are now beginning to fade and eventually will seem to them more like the fabric of a dream than actual realities as they once were.



CHAPTER XL.

1872

THE FIRST PART of the period of 1865—1872 saw the opening up of a number of new thoroughfares, which are now among the most prominent ones in town. They were Elm, Walnut, Grand, Division, Prospect, Center, Church, Mechanic and Broad streets.

Ford, Huntington, Baker, Yager and Miller are the names which stand forth conspicuously in connection with this great addition to the street system of Oneonta.

About the close of this period the avenues opened through the Watkins' farm, could be added to the corporation map.

The thoroughfare running parallel to and between the railroad and the Mill Ditch, extending from lower Main street to the freight-house was first opened to the public in October, 1865.

In the fall of the same year, when Oneonta was the railroad terminus, our town received and sent out passengers by seven daily stage coaches each way. Of these, Unadilla required two and Cooperstown,

Delhi, Franklin, Butternuts and Norwich one each, the latter stage accommodating the people of Morris and New Berlin as well.

The same fall witnessed the construction of the Hathaway House (originally called the Eagle Hotel) and the frame store opposite, on Broad street, the latter building being erected by E. R. Ford, Esq.

In the first half of 1866 there was a public movement made toward the establishment of a new county in the interest of the vicinity towns and Oneonta especially.

In the same year Bissell and Saunders erected the first brick business block in town.

About 1867 the large agricultural implement works of Ford and Howe were built near the corner of Mechanic and Broad streets.

The year 1868 saw the establishment, by G. A. Dodge, of the *Susquehanna Independent*,—the first Democratic newspaper published in Oneonta.

About this time the wooden sidewalk on the south-erly side of Main street was first curbed and the adjacent gutter first paved with cobble-stones.

In August, 1868, the Jacob Farrington brick foundry was destroyed by fire and about the same period, the new union school building was completed.

The fine new houses of E. D. Saunders, A. R. Dutton, Jay McDonald, H. N. Rowe and Cope Brothers on Elm and Walnut streets ; also those of David J.

Yager, and Ransom Mitchell on Main and River streets, respectively, were all built about this time.

During the years 1869 and 1870 Oneonta did not change materially, but in 1871 the village took a fresh start following the commencement of work on its first round house and railroad repair shop.

The First National Bank of Oneonta commenced business about the same time.

In the year 1872 the village received additional banking facilities with the opening of David Wilber's bank.

The following list comprises the names of sundry householders, etc., who were fellow townspeople of the writer's during either a part or all of the two periods of his residence in Oneonta a generation or more ago. Some of the people referred to, died before the year 1872 and others did not reside in Oneonta until shortly after that year.

Names of people mentioned elsewhere in this book are intended to be omitted in this list.

The writer has endeavored to include the name of every person of the class above specified, as well as certain others, who resided in Oneonta village within his recollection prior to the year 1871; also the more prominent of those who moved to our town within the next three or four years following.

There are doubtless some names which should appear here that are omitted, but not intentionally.

A. R. Allen, John Amsden, James Allen, Jerome Alger, B. Abell, J. W. Adams, Mr. Alpaugh, H. Alger, R. S. Adgate.

W. L. Brown, D. W. Brainard, Romeyn Brown, H. E. Bundy, S. M. Ballard, M. S. Briggs, I. D. Bullock, G. W. Butts, E. Benjamin, S. Bunn, Harvey Barnes, J. Brown, Warren Burton, A. Brewer, Stephen Barnes, L. Broadwell, Perry Bennett, Mr. Bassett, Jenks Bowen, Homer Brewer, Mr. Bristol, George Bixby, C. N. Beach, Dewitt C. Barnes, George Bissell, A. D. Bessey, Joseph Bowen, Oscar Beach, Victor Beach, William Bedford, Mr. Bedford, Nelson Ballard, A. Barnes, N. Beers, Mr. Brandt, Nathan Bridges, C. Bergin, E. G. Bixby, Andrew Brazee, A. Bissell, O. A. Benton, M. H. Bissell, Newell Beach, Fred. Bissell, N. A. Beers, Charles Butts, David Bennett, E. W. Bennett, D. Boardman, E. S. Bell, J. L. Burtis, Charles T. Bush, M. D., Mr. Benedict, Robert Boocock, M. D., Mr. Bresack, Homer Broadwell, Stephen Bull, Mr. Bradt, John Burt, Jr., Gilbert Bligh, A. M. Barnes, George Bligh, Robert Beach, G. W. Blend, R. D. Briggs.

John Cope, L. T. Coates, Horace Card, W. H. Couse, A. M. Carver, C. Crosier, Frank Crosier, Gilbert Campbell, John A. Comstock, James Cope, Mr. Cornell, B. M. Coy, A. J. Cooper, C. E. Currier, Thadeus Carr, Elvin Cutshaw, Mr. Chappell, Charles Coates, C. S. Carpenter, J. B. Cleveland, J. B. Camp, Jesse Cutler, C. W. Carpenter, M. J. Connell, H. G. Coon,

J. W. Carpenter, H. E. Conant, Mr. Capron, Charles D. Curtis, Rev. W. N. Cobb.

S. Deyo, Samuel F. Donnelly, Philip Dorsey, Thos. Doyle, Mr. Disbrow, John S. Driggs, Irving T. Doolittle, P. S. Dunham, John Dewar, S. Doolittle, A. D. Dye, T. L. Dawson, A. D. Dimmick, W. W. Darbee.

George F. Entler, M. D., L. S. Emmons, Carson Emmons, N. Edmonds, D. Ehle.

Sylvester Ford, Julius Fern, John B. Fletcher, Raymond Ford, Clinton E. Ford, Charles Freiot, Joseph S. Fritts, Daniel Falls, Jesse Fairchild, Josiah Farmer, O. Fleming, Charles E. Foote, William Fuller, Phineas C. Fish, Edwin T. Farmer, H. A. Fonda, G. Finn.

Frank Gould, L. H. Groat, M. F. Gould, P. C. Gilchrist, M. Gurney, Jay Gregory, Rev. A. Griffin, H. C. Grant, F. C. Gardner, Charles Gates, S. J. Gile, N. Graves, Albert Graves, W. Gillett, Ezra Graves.

Rev. E. C. Hodge, Henry Howe, George Hunter, George Hufford, S. T. Hudson, A. N. Howland, Mr. Huston, S. Harrington, E. W. Hopkins, N. Hoag, Charles Howard, Al. Hathaway, P. Hynes, R. V. Humphrey, J. P. Hudson, S. K. Huggins, Aaron Houghtaling, H. Hudson, Charles C. Houghton, E. Haswell, W. H. Hider, V. A. Hyam, Earnest Heuther, E. Hathaway, N. Hemstreet.

Mrs. Ingalls, John Ingalls, Lewis Ingalls.

W. H. Jefferson, Charles A. Jones, John Jones, Mr. Jacobs, J. W. Jenks, E. M. Johnson, J. K. P. Jackson, E. B. Jewell, Myron D. Jewell, E. A. Jones.

Marquis L. Keyes, Geo. Kirkland, Melville D. Keyes, M. Keenan, Edward Kniskern, Kelsey R. Kelly.

A. C. Lewis, H. L. Luther, W. A. Lakin, Philander Lane, B. H. Loring, L. B. Lennon, Leonard Leal, Jacob Lindsay, A. Lyon, Mr. Long, J. Lovett, F. Lathan, Frank Latson, A. B. Lacy, B. Loveland, Mr. Losee.

Samuel Mendel, T. S. Mears, Wesley Miller, George Mattice, A. Mandelbaum, Andrew Mendel, H. S. Morse, B. Manzer, John Mills, W. H. Mereness, C. L. Mickel, G. S. Mallory, Rev. O. T. Moulton, A. S. Miles, Asel Marvin, M. Maloney, Daniel McGinley, J. W. Mann, T. A. Maynard, S. Moore, Mrs. L. W. Miller, Doctor McDougal, R. W. Miller, Porter Morton, J. Morenus, George Madison, H. Mosher, T. K. Mosher, Jas. T. Marble, Jacob Meyer, J. Massett, W. L. Miller, J. B. Morrison, L. D. Moore, G. McCard, P. J. McGuire, Morrell Mitchell, D. H. Mead, Willard Morrell.

Hartford D. Nelson, T. A. Norton, A. J. Nowlan, J. F. Newell, S. Newman, C. Newman, H. M. Northrop.

J. M. Ostrom, George W. Ostrander, J. H. Ostrander, F. Ottersen, Mr. Osterhout.

O. W. Peck, M. D., Owen Phillips, E. Pelzer, W. M. Potter, E. M. Parmelee, C. B. Pepper, C. O. Payne, Rev. I. N. Pardee, George Parr, A. F. Packard, W. Packard, W. H. Peck, Stephen Parish, Joseph Price, John T. Pardoe, J. Potter, J. D. Primmer, Geo. A. Pardee, Mr. Pruyn, George Powell, Walter Pardoe, I. H. Peters, Welcome Parish, Thomas Pierce, Leonard Pratt, Alonzo Pratt, W. Patterson, Mr. Petrie, J. F. Perkins, O. E. Pratt, Orrin Packard, Leroy Pratt, G. Potter, Benjamin Pierce, J. Pendleton, H. Parish.

Reuben Reynolds, John Roberts, G. W. Reynolds, M. N. Rowe, R. Richards, A. Rowland, E. Roberts, George Rowe, John Ruland, E. C. Reynolds, J. C. Richmond, A. G. Reynolds, George Reynolds, Charles Reynolds, T. H. Rockwell, Mrs. Ray, Emulus A. Reynolds, Byron Rose, Morton Radcliffe, Mr. Rynus.

George Scramling, James Stewart, Walter Scott, Semour Scott, A. G. Strong, E. A. Scramling, H. C. Stratford, Algernon Sabin, George Snow, A. J. Sullivan, Z. H. Sloat, Howard Saunders, Chester Smith, Irving Steere, E. J. Stever, William Scott, P. Smith, J. A. Sargeants, Mr. Seymour, M. D. Safford, E. Smith, George D. Scrambling, A. D. Smith, Charles Smith, Rodney Snow, H. Spaulding, Mr. Spude, H. G. Strong, Mr. Sloan, Wm. Spaulding, M. Spencer, W. H. Siple, Isaac Spencer, Charles Stickles, J. D. Stowell, Erastus Short, C. Spencer, W. K. Sherwood,

H. P. Skinner, Charles Saxton, H. R. Skinner, Frank Strait, George Swart, J. B. Shove, E. B. Shove, H. C. Smith, Mrs. Scanling, H. M. Schofield.

W. A. E. Tompkins, A. Teller, C. Thompson, Mr. Tarbox.

Christian Uebel, C. Utter.

E. M. Vosburgh, D. A. Van Wie, Andrew Van Wie, H. B. VanAlstine, A. L. Villoz, Mr. Vanderburg, Mr. Vincent, J. O. Voorhies, L. Vrooman, C. Vandervoort.

George I. Wilber, W. H. Woodin, Monroe Westcott, H. G. Wood, Fred Wilcox, Charles J. Wilbur, Parker Wilson, Paul Wadsworth, Charles A. Watkins, Henry Wickham, George Watkins, J. P. Wells, A. C. Walcott, T. Willahan, Mr. Whitcomb, James Mc D. Watkins, Charles Wadsworth, Philander Wright, J. H. Wetsell, Mr. Winslow, E. H. Wright, Henry C. Whitman, Edward Williams, A. F. Wing, Gould Washburn, A. R. Watkins, A. Walling, Charles Ward, R. Winn, W. H. Williams, Chauncey Ward, Eugene Washbon, R. White, A. Weenink.

Myron Yager, C. Yagel, D. Young, T. Yager.



CHAPTER XLI.

FIRST TRIP TO MASONVILLE.

IT WAS WELL ALONG in the summer of 1872 that my father and I left Oneonta at an early hour of a certain afternoon, bound for the above mentioned town.

A little while before this period, we had acquired some landed interests in that section of Delaware county which occasionally had necessitated father's presence there but at the time referred to, the writer had never visited the same.

I remember it was shortly after the haying season as, seated in our buggy drawn by a bay horse named "Billy," we made our way down the valley of the Susquehanna.

At Otego I noticed some pleasant looking homes, among them being the residence of William Birdsall with spacious grounds surrounding, located on the northerly side of the leading street.

The large barn of this gentleman surmounted by a conspicuous wooden elephant always attracted the attention of strangers.

After leaving Otego village we crossed several tributaries of the river, one of which father said was called Flax Island creek.

It was a warm, dusty day and upon arriving at the Wells Bridge tavern we stopped for a few minutes and watered our horse.

Resuming our journey we presently reached Unadilla village which, with its wide main street running parallel with the river, beautiful shade trees and fine stone sidewalks, strengthened the agreeable impression which I originally formed of the place at the time of my prior visit already referred to.

Crossing the Susquehanna here, we left our own fair county behind us and entered the more hilly precincts of Delaware.

Toward dark we arrived at the house of a Mr. Heath, farmer and ex-deputy sheriff who at that time lived not far from the Sidney-Masonville boundary line.

It was now cool, with indications of frost and the invitation extended us, by Mr. Heath, to remain over night at his house I was pleased to see my father accept.

Our host lighted his lantern and showed us the way to the barn and our horse having been duly cared for, we returned to the house where supper was soon prepared in our behalf by Mrs. Heath.

Besides Mr. Heath and wife I met, at the same

time, their daughter, Mrs. Marble, who was visiting her parents accompanied by an infant child.

The latter lady was the wife of Peter Milo Marble who had formerly been employed by us at Oneonta but was then located on a farm of ours which we designed visiting the following day.

After some conversation with the various members of the household, father and I were assigned to a bedroom, small and neat in appearance, the inner walls of which were constructed of some dark colored wood from floor to ceiling, making a rather novel and pleasing effect.

Somehow or other, those bedroom walls made a very lasting impression on my mind, nineteen years having come and gone since I saw them for the first and last time.

The next morning we arose early and after breakfast resumed our journey, the sun shining warm and bright from a cloudless sky.

Passing through quiet Masonville village, we continued up the valley about two miles ; then taking a right hand road and travelling thereon a mile or two, reached our farm where Mr. Marble came out of a new unfinished house, on the easterly side of the highway to meet us.

I had not seen him for several years and our meeting was correspondingly pleasant.

Father was building the house referred to, near the summit of the divide at the head of Mormon Hol-

low, thus commanding an extensive view in the direction of Cannonsville. After he had given Milo some directions regarding certain proposed improvements on the farm we repaired to the house where lunch was improvised in a bachelor's way.

Later in the afternoon we continued our journey in the direction of Cannonsville.

Night began to overtake us not far from where the Mormon Hollow road joins the Trout Creek road and almost simultaneously we reached the house and sawmill of a man named Van Valkenburg with whom father had business relations. Upon invitation of this gentleman we concluded to remain with him over night.

A little while before supper I noticed a boy somewhat younger than myself ride by on a handsome pony. I was told the lad's name was Johnson.

As the shades of evening were enveloping this little valley which presented a scene so unlike my own home surroundings, I began to feel a trifle lonely and homesick. The frogs in the neighboring mill pond were now sending up a full chorus and rather added to the natural melancholy that seemed to surround the departing day.

I went to bed early and was presently oblivious to all surroundings.

Leaving Van Valkenburg's the next morning we reached Oneonta the evening of the same day.

CHAPTER XLII.

BOARDING-SCHOOL, 1870-1873.

I ALWAYS LOOK BACK to my experience at boarding-school with a great deal of pleasure, for it was an extremely interesting feature of my life.

The natural surroundings of this new residence were very unlike what I had been accustomed to, in my Otsego county home. The hills of Norwalk lacked the dimensions and the great wooded slopes so familiar to Oneonta people. Moreover, the landscapes were typical of New England scenery—being decidedly rocky in their aspect.

Long Island Sound could be seen in the winter-time from our school-grounds—it being but a few miles away, toward the south. In the summer, however, the marine view was lost on account of the intervening foilage.

In those days the borough of Norwalk was six or seven times as large as Oneonta and, moreover, of ancient origin even in Revolutionary days.

Our school-building, located on the side of a hill near its summit, close to the western limits of and

overlooking the town, was a three-story and basement structure, with a large play-ground in front of its terraced slopes. This place of recreation extended down the hill toward Norwalk and comprised one level piece of ground where we used to play baseball, while over toward the northern limits of the same was a miniature lake.

Doctor Fitch, the head of the school, was a man who stood about six feet three inches high in his stockings and was accustomed to being obeyed. He had passed middle age at this time; always kept his face shaven smooth, and wore a wig.

There were, perhaps, twenty boarding pupils at our school and about as many "day scholars." The Doctor had sundry assistant teachers who aided him in imparting knowledge to our eager young minds. His discipline was good and his modes of punishment for offenders, I thought, were rather original.

For illustration, when a pupil was not attending to his duty, perchance the following dialogue would occur :

The Doctor—"Master Jones?"

Master Jones—"Sir."

The Doctor—"What are you doing?"

Master Jones—"Nothing, sir."

The Doctor—"Will you have it sweetened?"

This, of itself, was sufficient warning to a prudent lad, even if he escaped with nothing worse. Master

Jones might have been lacking in that quality however and presently have repeated the offense. Then there was no further warning ; no additional intimation of impending trouble, but the young gentleman suddenly found himself looking down from an elevation of seven or eight feet at the ends of two powerful arms. Below him was a pair of cold, blue eyes, and for spectactors there were forty delighted boys. A moment later the unfortunate lad was placed in a standing position on the Doctor's desk, where for, perhaps, a quarter of an hour he answered the purpose of a powerful warning for the balance of the pupils.

Sunday mornings and evenings Doctor Fitch and the head teacher would walk us to church in a procession of two by two, and after service conduct us home again.

There were certain town boys who looked upon us with marked dislike and did not hesitate to show it if a good opportunity presented itself to them.

Sometimes the Doctor would take us out boating and fishing. We would occasionally descend the Norwalk river as far as Bett's Island, the "Calf Pasture," etc.

A colored man, who was both deaf and dumb, took care of our boat when we were not using it. The Doctor could converse with him rapidly by manipulating his fingers so as to make the letters of the unfortunate man's alphabet.

While in Norwalk I heard lectures from some of the most eminent men on the platform.

In the summer vacation of 1871 I visited California in company with my uncle, C. P. Huntington, while in the corresponding vacation of 1872 I was at Burnt Hills and Oneonta, at the former place seeing my grandmother Saunders for the last time on earth.

The faculty, of the Norwalk school which I attended, comprised besides Doctor Fitch, Messrs. Kimball, Colburn and Jones; also Misses Bixby and Buell.

Of the students I recall to mind the following : Bissell, Byington Brothers, Baird, Baker, Mott, Siliman, Lynes, Crofut, Fred and Wallie Knapp, Sheldon Brothers, Lockwood Brothers, Chaffee, Bishop, Conklin, Huntington, Kendall, Stearns, Randall, Nichols, Moody, Couch, Prowitt, Fowler, Miller, Stoddard, Hoyt, Beatty, Betts, Carter, Bennett, Green, Curtis, Fisher, Cooley, Cousins, Cape, etc., nearly all bearing old New England names.

Some of the boys were in those days disposed to look upon the Doctor as a tyrant, but I think of all of them living at the present time, there is not one but would say he was a good and worthy man.

* * * * *

I have before me an old program of the Oneonta school public exercises, held on Tuesday evening,

June 25, 1872, at the Academy street school building. Thinking it will be of interest to those living whose names are mentioned, I take the liberty of inserting in this place a copy of the same :

ORDER OF EXERCISES

*Music**Prayer*

- | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|---|----------------|
| 1 | The Two Villages | - | - | Hattie Ford |
| 2 | { The Angel of Night | - | | Jennie Watkins |
| | { The Angel of Day | - | - | Alice Moody |
| 3 | The Used-up Candidate | - | | Eugene Alton |
| 4 | Dolly Chesterfield | - | - | Maggie Jacobs |

Music

- | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 5 | Anna Glenn | - | - | Emily L. Bull |
| 6 | The End of the Bow | - | - | Anna Alton |
| 7 | Essay—Self Control | - | | Hattie Cummings |
| 8 | The Rival Speakers | Mertie Ford, | Charles Lewis | |
| 9 | Cæsar Rowan | - | - | Leon Mendel |

Music

- | | | |
|----|---|---------------|
| 10 | Milton on the Loss of his Sight, | Amanda Mickel |
| 11 | Curiosity—Translation from the French | |
| | - | Kate Sullivan |
| 12 | Dialogue—Country Cousins and City Cousins | |
| 13 | The Raven | Clara Pope |

Music

- 14 Essay—Live for a Purpose - Orline Mickel
15 Dialogue—Tied to an Apron String.
16 The Roman Soldier - Arthur Sullivan
17 Gymnastic Exercises.

Music

Reading Promotions

Music



CHAPTER XLIII.

HOME LIFE IN 1873.

TOWARD THE END OF MARCH, 1873, I left the educational institution of Doctor Fitch and finished my school life simultaneously. It was not without considerable regret in some respects that I took my departure from this New England household, where I had formed many pleasant attachments among my teachers and fellow pupils.

Years afterwards I visited the old seminary and found the venerable Doctor dead, the great building tenantless and the breath of decay in the atmosphere.

Shortly after leaving the Norwalk school I returned to Oneonta, reaching there a little after dark of an April day. Upon my arrival, I found the snow still lingering and the night decidedly cool. The warm atmosphere of our old sitting-room seemed to add to the welcome accorded me.

My cousin, Annie Van Vranken, was visiting us at this time and the same train I reached Oneonta on, likewise brought her father who had some busi-

ness to attend to in that vicinity. A day or two after my arrival I accompanied him to the town of Meredith where we took dinner at E. Osterhout's and returned home toward evening.

About this time, father had a number of men making improvements on a piece of land owned by him and located on the Babcock Hollow road not far from The Plains.

When the spring had so far advanced that the roads were fairly dry, father and I made a trip to Tompkins. We left Oneonta early in the afternoon and reached Young's Station on the Midland railway about five o'clock. At this point it looked like rain, so we arranged to stay over night with Mr. Young, a son of James C. Young the latter at that time being a prominent farmer and money loaner living in the vicinity of Otsdawa.

The next morning we left Mr. Young's and toward noon reached father's farm in Masonville where we had dinner. We then continued our trip as far as Loomis brook where father had another farm, occupied by a man named Joseph Webster. From this latter point we returned to Young's Station the same day, where we remained all night again, reaching home the next day.

Along in the summer I spent a week or two on a dairy farm of ours, located a mile and a quarter southerly from Colliers. This farm was in the town of Milford and bordered on the Maryland township

and Delaware county lines. The place was nearly surrounded by woods. Father bought this farm in 1867 and putting up a cheap house thereon, sent Isaac Cornwell to occupy it that same year. Mr. Cornwell was then advanced considerably in years. He had formerly been a lumberman on the Delaware river and at one period of his life had been a person of great physical strength. Even in 1867 he retained much of the vigor of his earlier days. He bore the reputation of a very honest and industrious man.

When I visited this farm in 1873 old Mr. Cornwell was dead and James his son was occupying the place, a fine new farmhouse and barn having been recently constructed thereon.

The approach from the main road was through a narrow strip of woods, which made the farm seem very much out of the way and a little romantic in its location.

The first time I was ever there was upon returning to Oneonta from a trip to Milford that father and I made, the same year he bought the place.

At the time of the last visit referred to, E. Williams and John Carroll were assisting us there in haying. About a year later father erected a stone dairy house for the use of Mr. Cornwell, Jacob Y. Winne building the walls thereof with his accustomed celerity and good workmanship. In this dairy house is a door that formerly belonged to the old Oneonta House, built by Mr. Angell.

At the time father bought this farm there were, perhaps, twenty acres of pine timber on the same which he cut and had sawed for his own use. The late Jared Goodyear owned forty acres of pine near us which father tried to buy of him. Mr. Goodyear's well known partiality to that class of timber land, which was then getting very scarce, found decided expression in a negative answer.

Toward the end of May I accompanied father on a trip to Edson's Corners and the same month, he sent me to Delhi on some legal business. He was then having litigation with a man named Wm. Van Zandt who lived in Tompkins. It was my first visit to the capital of Delaware county. The business there delayed me until well along in the day, and when coming down the Swart Hollow road late in the evening, upon my return to Oneonta, I met father on the way to meet me, having become alarmed over my prolonged absence.

In the summer of the same year, Obed Carroll and family arrived from Missouri. Mr. Carroll commenced work for us about the same time. He was one of five brothers, all of whom were in the employ of father at one time.

On the morning of July 22d, 1873, while standing in the doorway of our barn on West street I heard one of the village church bells toll seventy-five times. The evening before, my uncle, E. D. Saunders, had called at our house and informed us

that E. R. Ford, Esq., who had been sick for some time, was rapidly sinking. The tolling of the bell proved to be for his death. The loss of this leading citizen and good man was deplored by all.

Mr. Ford, although not a pioneer of the town, was almost looked upon as its father, for many years. He was not only a man of uncommon business qualifications but possessed a nature full of sympathy for the unfortunate, provided they were industrious and worthy. This trait of his character was oftentimes accompanied by tangible assistance as well.

He was a man that took pleasure in noticing children and that was sure to afford them as much pleasure as it did him. The first sleigh-ride I remember ever taking was with Mr. Ford early in the sixties when we visited the rear end of his home farm, extending, what seemed to me then, a long ways back from the village.

His funeral was held on a beautiful summer day and the services conducted at the stone house were attended by a great number of people, including many prominent men from our section of the State.

On the twenty-first day of August, 1873, I sailed from New York on the steamer *Isaac Bell* for Norfolk and Richmond. At the latter point I took the cars for St. Albans and Huntington.

I remained in West Virginia several months, returning to Oneonta toward the close of the year.

1873

CHAPTER XLIV.

FIRST TRIP TO HARTWICK.

ABOUT SEVEN O'CLOCK in the evening of Saturday, May 10, 1873, Edward Williams accompanied by the writer drove out of our yard immediately after supper and started on a night ride of twenty miles.

Our point of destination was the house of Mr. Hollister of Hartwick, he being Mr. Williams' father-in-law.

At that time, we were getting short of hay at home and father was desirous of having a quantity of the same brought from our farm in the town of New Lisbon to supply his live-stock in Oneonta. He accordingly prepared to send out two teams for that purpose. It was arranged for Mr. Williams to leave Oneonta with the first team on the Saturday evening before referred to, enabling him to pass Sunday with his relations in Hartwick, while on the following Monday morning the second team, to be driven by Joshua Roe, was to leave Oneonta very early in the day and meet us at the New Lisbon farm. I

had never been in Hartwick and availed myself of this opportunity for seeing that section of the county.

We were obliged to make this trip on a hay wagon for reasons already understood, but by placing boards across from one side of the rigging to the other and covering the seats thus made with buffalo robes, were enabled to travel very comfortably.

It was at the close of a pleasant spring day that we started, making our departure via the Blend or "hill road," as it is occasionally called, and in a short time Oneonta was left in the valley below us.

Our route was almost constantly up grade for an hour or more after leaving home and by the time we reached the summit of the range of hills between the Oneonta and Otego creeks,

The mantle of night had fallen down o'er the earth,
And the last fading landscape was lost to our view.

Upon reaching a point where the road commenced to slowly descend into the valley of the Otego, our attention was attracted to some fires which were blazing on the opposite hills, perhaps a mile and a half away, toward the west. These fires, we afterwards learned, were on the farm of William Gile, who had been burning a considerable area of new or fallow land.

We reached the valley road presently and followed the same past the quiet village of Laurens, and a little later there loomed up a steep acclivity on our

right covered by a growth of hemlock, the property of my father and commonly called the Owl Patch.

Fourteen miles from Oneonta we reached the village of Mount Vision and the night was then so far advanced that the lights in the houses were nearly all out.

The air was now getting chilly and our conversation almost ceased. Far away in our rear, the fires on the distant hills were still visible, but these too presently disappeared and almost the only appeal to our attention left, was either the solitary bark of some remote watch dog or the constant noise made by the rumbling of our wagon as we journeyed over the hilly roads of Hartwick.

About eleven o'clock we reached the farmhouse of Mr. Hollister with no welcome ray of light therefrom to break the surrounding darkness. We presently aroused the gentleman, however, and after caring for our horses with the aid of a lantern, we entered the house and straightway went to bed.

In the afternoon of the following day Edward Williams and I walked across the fields for about a mile and a half in a northwesterly direction, to the house of his father, Marlin Williams, who owned a fine farm on the Otego creek, a mile or two above Hartwick village. Toward evening we returned to Mr. Hollister's, where we again passed the night.

On Monday morning, May 12th, my friend and I hitching on to the hay wagon got an early start,

drove through Hartwick village to the west bank of the Otego creek, followed down the same to a branch road located a little below South Hartwick, turned to the right to enter the same and a few minutes later reached the summit of the low range of hills lying between the east and west branches of the aforesaid creek.

The moment we reached this elevation, we were enabled to see my father's farm, located below us in the valley of the West Branch, and there by the barn we likewise saw standing a man, also a team of horses hitched to a wagon with a hay rigging. Joshua had arrived from Oneonta in advance of us. We waved our hats and saw him respond in like manner.

Descending into the valley we found that he had reached there but a few minutes before we first discovered him from the top of the hill.

We presently commenced work repairing a fence extending up the hill along the southerly line of the farm.

The day getting decidedly warm as the forenoon advanced, upon the suggestion of one of the men I jumped on a horse and rode down to a house near Fall Bridge, owned by a man named Johnson, where I secured a jug of cider.

Returning with it to the farm we partook of the beverage and found it a trifle "hard."

There was no one occupying this farm at the time so we took our meals during our sojourn there with a widow lady named Mrs. Naylor, who owned the adjoining place on the south boundary.

In the afternoon of the day we arrived, our work on the fence was resumed. Upon reaching the top of the hill, having entered the woods we discovered an immense hemlock tree which, by jointly clasping hands, we could barely reach around.

After supper at Mrs. Naylor's we returned to our farm and prepared to go to bed. The house was very ancient in appearance and looked spookish, so for the adventure I proposed that we occupy one of the rooms. We accordingly took our buffalo robes and some blankets and retired to a bed which we improvised with the same on the bare floor of the west chamber upstairs.

Presently we heard some strange sounds in the old structure which were probably caused by the cracking of the woodwork, owing to changing atmospheric conditions as the evening advanced. After a little more time had passed I asked the men if they did not notice in the starlight certain vague and shadowy forms over against the southerly wall of the apartment, but found they were not inclined to be frightened much.

It then became so cold that we gathered up our blankets and robes and repaired to the hay mow in

the barn where we finally passed the night with a fair degree of comfort. I subsequently ascertained that the ancient house upon this farm was erected, by a man named Harrington, in the year 1813.

Shortly after arising, the next morning, we distinctly heard the steam whistle of the railroad shops at Oneonta—a distance of twelve miles in an air line.

After breakfast, while the men were loading the wagons with hay, I took a horseback ride up the valley as far as the wayside cemetery located somewhat beyond the house of the late Isaac Gregory. After spending a little time inspecting some of the old tombstones, I returned to the farm and found the men nearly ready to start for Oneonta.

On our way home we stopped a minute or two at the aforesaid Mr. Johnson's.

It was well along in the afternoon of the same day that we reached the end of our journey.



1874

CHAPTER XLV.

ONLY THE BRIGHTNESS OF MORNING.

WHEN MAN ATTAINS the fullness of years and like a ripened harvest, is cut down and borne away, it is only in accordance with the eternal fitness of things ; it is but in exact conformity with what we are taught to expect from the earliest stages of our knowledge.

But there is a period in life, when the implacable and eternal foe and master cannot assault our sacred citadels and bear away the fruits of victory, without arousing within us a feeling of rebellion toward the inevitable, which philosophy cannot lessen and the lapse of time can only partially overcome.

When Death aims his ruthless and successful assaults against those who are standing in the full bloom and blush of the beautiful morning, there is a pathos attending their untimely fall which we fail to discover in those who, having passed through the heat and the burden of day, fall down by the wayside at evening, filled with knowledge and years.

I think my old Oneonta schoolmates, who may peruse this article, will agree that there were few

deaths in our younger days that made so profound an impression upon our minds as did those of Jennie Lewis and Fannie McDonald.

An interval of seven years elapsing between the two summons, each took her departure for another world at about one and the same age — sixteen years.

Jennie Lewis was some years older than the writer and passed away while paying a visit to some relatives in another town. Her death was sudden and unexpected and the announcement of it in Oneonta was received by many with an incredulous look, for it seemed but yesterday we saw her in all the innocence and happiness of youth.

She was beloved by all ages and classes of people and I remember, on the day of her funeral there was hardly a boy or girl knowing her in life who failed to be present upon that mournful occasion.

Fannie McDonald died from the effects of a long, lingering illness, so that for much of the last two years of her life, she was rarely seen by her many friends. It was the beginning of the final separation that removed her forever from the school, the church and all the familiar walks of her girlhood.

Toward the end of life her countenance gradually assumed the color of white marble, and one who was much with her during that period said she seemed hardly mortal, for her gentle soul had already caught


and was entering the glow—the inscrutable light which surrounds and encloses Eternity.

“Everybody loved her” were the words spoken of Fannie, by an aged man, many long years after her death—and that was a text, a sermon and her best eulogy all in one.



CHAPTER XLVI.

A RIDE ON A STORMY DAY.

N THE FOURTH DAY OF JULY, 1874, I left Oneonta a little after one o'clock P. M., with a two-horse wagon, bound for Masonville on some business for father.

My departure from home was on a cloudy day with some indications of rain.

When in the vicinity of the railroad crossing west of the Oneonta Plains, near where the Barnes and Fox mill had once been located, the clouds began to thicken rapidly. Upon reaching the residence of Reuben Hale about one mile east of Otego, the sky became so black and threatening that I took the liberty of driving into this gentleman's barn at a moment simultaneous with a terrific clap of thunder and the loud pattering on the roof of the first few preliminary drops of rain that preceded the storm.

I noticed several young ladies in Mr. Hale's doorway who quickly withdrew to the house for protection from the impending elements.

The rain fell in great quantities for perhaps twenty minutes. About half an hour after first entering the barn, the clouds having broken away, I was enabled to resume my journey, although the muttering of distant thunder reminding one of the only partially appeased choler of some angry beast of prey, seemed to betoken a renewal of the storm in the near future. Nor were these indications amiss, for shortly after crossing one of the bridges at Unadilla village, later on in the day, and while following the road skirting the south bank of the Susquehanna, the clouds had rapidly concentrated again in angry array ; once more the warning drops of rain began to strike upon the adjacent foliage, when a blinding flash of lightning filled the surrounding space as the thunderbolt struck the bosom of the placid river but a few yards away from me.

I felt rather apprehensive regarding my safety on account of being so near the water and accordingly urged the team forward on a run to get out of the dangerous proximity of the stream as soon as possible.

At this time the rain was not falling fast so I continued my journey some considerable distance without stopping. Later on, however, the storm was renewed and once more I was obliged to seek the friendly shelter of a barn.

On account of the delays experienced, it was after dark before I reached the road leading directly into

Mormon Hollow. The sky continued cloudy, even into the night, it being difficult to see the road at all beyond the horses. The adjacent fields, upon approaching my destination, seemed of a white color as I strained my eyes in attempting to penetrate the intervening darkness. I presently discovered that this ghastly appearance was owing to the fact that the unmown meadows were thickly besprinkled with daisies.

About nine o'clock in the evening I arrived at the red farmhouse of Stephen Hoyt where I passed the night, returning home on the following day.



CHAPTER XLVII.

FARM LIFE IN 1874.

I RETURNED TO ONEONTA from West Virginia, as before intimated, toward the close of December, 1873.

A few days later I went over to the Laurens farm where father was clearing some land on the Otego creek flat.

There were six or eight men at work there, part of whom lived at the farmhouse, then occupied by Joshua Roe. Some of the men were felling trees and cutting them into saw logs, some were hauling wood to the factory at Laurens and others were getting out hemlock bark.

Among the men thus engaged were Joshua Roe, Charles Carroll, F. M. Davis, Elmer Salisbury, Richard Crandall, D. Brumaghim, F. Hackett and John Ottman.

In the Spring of 1874 father and I made a trip to Cannonsville, also visited a farm that had recently come into our possession, situated on the Delaware river, a mile or two above that village. We returned home via Masonville and the Ouleout valley stop-

ping on the way at our farm located at the head of Swart Hollow and then occupied by Charles Carroll. This latter place was near the Round Top and commanded an extensive view, including several villages.

In the month of May I stopped at the New Lisbon farm for several weeks. At that time there was a man on this place named Prentice, somewhat past middle age, and the family, for the time being, comprised simply himself, his wife and the writer.

Mr. Prentice possessed a good strong voice and arising with the lark in the morning would make the welkin ring with his shoutings, in the overflowing exuberance of pure happiness.

South Hartwick, sometimes called "Sodom Point," is located about one mile over the hill from this farm and occasionally I would walk over there for the mail. Besides "Sodom Point" there were other sobriquets applied to vicinity hamlets, such, for illustration, as "Sheepskin Corners," Pete Hook" and "Peth." Our nearest neighbor was Isaac Gregory, supervisor of New Lisbon and a prominent farmer, who lived in a stone house, on the opposite side of the road, a few rods above us.

During most of June I stopped with Joshua Roe at the Laurens farm. On Sunday the fourteenth of that month, there was a slight fall of snow, early in the morning. A little later in the same day Joshua

and I went to Morris, returning home toward evening.

The season up to that time and even later was uncommonly rainy. Upon the evening of Sunday, the seventh day of June, our section of the state was visited by a great rain storm, accompanied by hail, thunder and lightning. The Susquehanna river overflowed its banks at Oneonta while crops in Hartwick were greatly damaged.

A little later in the summer Edward Williams and the writer made a trip to Sidney and Masonville, stopping the first night with Mr. Van Buren and the second night with Charles Hollister, both farmers of Sidney.

In August I was again at the New Lisbon farm. While there, this time, we had the house reshingled, and I recollect there was a colored man from Oneonta, named John Morris, who helped in this work. He was, like most of his race, fond of music and would occasionally favor us with a rendition of "The Sword of Bunker-Hill" in a voice so stentorian, that Mr. Prentice would withdraw from the scene in chagrin.

Joshua came up with some farm supplies a little later and I returned with him.

In October, father had a large number of men on the Laurens farm, driving piles in the Otego creek and filling in between the same and the bank with logs, brush and stone in order to protect our adja-

cent meadow flat from the ravages of the stream at high water time. Among the men here employed were Joshua Roe, David Alger, Richard Crandall, John Ottman, William Gile, G. H. Ramsey, Marshall Grannis, Charles Carroll, Obed Carroll, William Carroll and John Whitlock. A man from Laurens village, whose name I think was Menzo Johnson, also assisted in the work with a pair of oxen.

Toward the close of the same month I accompanied father on a trip to Wayne county, Pennsylvania, via Cannonsville and Deposit.

A little later, I went to Stamford upon some business for father. I stopped there at a hotel all night where I met Ezra Gifford of Oneonta. From Stamford I continued my journey to DeLancey, a little below Delhi, and returned home on the day following.

One evening, about this same period, Joshua Roe who was then living on Cherry street, came to me with the information that two certain parties, entering our barn and helping themselves in an unauthorized manner to a horse and buggy, had started for a dance that was announced to take place that evening in a hop-house near the upper end of Swart Hollow. Joshua was suffering with a felon on one of his fingers at the time, but proposed that he should accompany me on a night trip to recover the missing property.

So we hitched up a horse to another buggy and in a short time had left the glimmering lights of the village, far down in the valley below us. Upon approaching our destination we could hear the sound of music and revelry issuing forth into the frosty night from the precincts of the hop-house.

Driving to the barn we immediately discovered the horse and vehicle we were after and took charge of the same without delay.

As we were harnessing the recovered horse, up came the men who had made all the trouble and impudently declared they would not allow us to take possession of our own property, in which line of procedure they received encouragement by murmurs of approval of their course from sundry of their friends who were standing near.

It immediately occurred to me that the chances were in favor of certain of father's employes being participants in the dance in the neighboring building, so I straightway started for assistance. Upon entering the lower room of the hop-house, the first person whom I saw was Charles Carroll who at that time was still occupying our farm in that same vicinity.

Charley stood and still stands about six feet three inches high in his stockings and was a man who never felt averse to a scuffle.

A very few words explained to him the difficulties of our situation and to hear, with him, was to act.

Stepping to the foot of the stairs leading to the floor above, which was then shaking with the tread of two score dancing feet, he spoke the word "John" in a voice that was heard above the sound of the music. In an instant, one of his brothers appeared and we immediately started for the barn. Upon arriving there, the trouble that had seemed to be brewing, as quickly subsided, so Joshua and I were soon homeward bound with the recovered property.

* * * * *

The year 1874 brought to Oneonta a better quality of amusements in the line of public exhibitions than the town had ever enjoyed before.

On the 21st of March, Elizabeth Cady Stanton gave an interesting lecture at the Presbyterian church. Two days later, at the same place, she was followed by Blind Tom, the colored musical prodigy.

Many people will remember the astonishing performance, given on the piano, by this famous negro boy who, in all things else that pertained not to music, was but little, if any, removed from actual idiocy.

On the evening of June 16th, Philip Phillips gave a vocal rendition of sacred music at the Methodist church.

Many people who attended his concert will remember the fact that it was an extremely stormy night.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

FARM LIFE IN 1875.

IN THE EARLY PART of the spring of 1875, father wished to send a number of dairy cows from Oneonta to the Masonville farms and the writer volunteered to assist John Ottman to drive them.

The snow, at that time, still covered the ground to a considerable depth, and I found, before reaching Otego, that we had entered upon no holiday occupation.

The cows being active and fond of adventure at the commencement of our journey, seemed inclined and anxious to explore every yard, field and lane that presented an open gateway as well as every connecting highway that we came to. This necessitated more or less wading through the snow for us while in pursuit of them and as a result, upon reaching Wells' Bridge, John and I began to feel in a considerable degree the natural effects of our exertions. We accordingly stopped there at the tavern for dinner and likewise fed and rested the cows.

Along in the afternoon we resumed our journey and were thankful to discover that they were now inclined to be driven without making us much trouble.

We crossed the Susquehanna at Unadilla and about dark reached a farmhouse near the summit of the divide between Young's station and Masonville, where we remained all night, reaching our destination the next forenoon.

Walking back to Unadilla, in the course of a day or two, I took the cars for home.

Later in the year I passed a little time on our Charlotte creek place, occupied by James Cornwell. At this same time father had two carpenters there, doing some work on the barn, and a little later we put them to work making sundry repairs on the "Slab City" (West Davenport) hotel, at the top of the hill. One of these carpenters was from Madison county and was fond of relating incidents in connection with the depredations of the Loomis family near his former home.

About this time father and I made a trip up the Schenevus valley, stopping all night with a man named Mulkins who lived near Maryland station.

In July I made a trip to New York and visited Watervliet relatives on my return.

In the early part of Fall I was again at the Cornwell place for a few days. At that time there was a pleasant old couple named Woodbeck living just across the road from where I was stopping.

Later on in the season I made business trips for father to Gilbertsville, to Schenevus and to Coopers-town.

In November I visited Schenectady, dined with Major Freeman, formerly of Givens Hotel and also took a ride around town with S. P. Franchot on the following day.

Among employes of father's, not already mentioned, who were with us more or less during the three preceding years were Stephen Carroll, Eugene Cipperley, Thomas Duval, William Wright, Byron Jones, Mr. Murdock, Henry Backus, S. J. Cummins, John Sargeants, H. Whitlock, J. McMullen and Son, Orrin Sisson, Charles H. Mayo, William Schermerhorn, Samuel Judson, Mr. Austin, Gaius Ward, William Hilsinger and Charles Seymour.

Early in the evening of the 11th day of the last mentioned month, father sent me with four teams to the house of Jefferson Crandall in "the hemlocks." Mr. Crandall had recently taken on shares our Stephen Hoyt farm in Masonville and the aforesaid teams were for the purpose of moving his household goods to his new home. We started from "the hemlocks" a little after ten o'clock, P. M., with the following drivers : Charles Carroll, John Ottman, Joshua Roe and the writer.

It was close to midnight, with the moon and stars shining brightly, when we entered Oneonta, Joshua and I bringing up the rear of the procession. Upon approaching the Freewill Baptist church, we cut loose from the advance men, and turning into Maple street, started for Joshua's house on Cherry street,

with the intention of rejoining our companions at some point beyond Colonel Snow's, they in the meantime having kept straight ahead on Main street to Chestnut.

Stopping at Cherry street for but a few minutes, we did not overtake the other men, however, until we had passed the house of a Mr. Bresack, near the first railroad crossing at The Plains. Our progress was necessarily confined to walking, on account of the heavy loads. Toward morning we all became somewhat chilled, and Joshua getting drowsy in passing over the Reuben Hale hill, had a narrow escape from falling out of his wagon. At Otego, endeavoring unsuccessfully to arouse the village landlord, we continued our journey through the cold night.

About six o'clock in the morning we reached the house of a man named Hickox (several miles east of Unadilla village,) where we had breakfast. Resuming our journey, we took dinner at a farm-house in Sidney and arrived at our destination a few hours later.


Upon our return we reached Wells' Bridge about noon, where we had dinner and arrived home a little before dark.

Toward the end of the year I went into business in Oneonta village as will duly appear in a following chapter.

1876

CHAPTER XLIX.

A HALF-SHIRE TRIP.

 ON THE 8th day of January, 1876, a public meeting was held at the Central Hotel to inaugurate a movement toward making a half-shire town of Oneonta.

Later in the same month, I took several petitions with blank spaces appertaining for signatures and started forth from the village one morning for the purpose of securing endorsements in the Otsdawa and West Laurens districts.

I was conveyed by horse and buggy as far as West Oneonta and thenceforward continued my trip afoot.

From the latter place I followed the road to Otsdawa and thence crossed over the boundary line into the township of Laurens. I took with me what lunch I required and stopping by the wayside a little after noon, partook of the same.

I was very successful in getting signatures to the petitions and do not recollect one failure made during the day.

Sometimes I would find the parties I was in search of, at the house or the barn, and once or twice I

remember following up the sound of axes from the adjacent woods, and interviewing the farmers in the depths of the forest.

It was close to nightfall of the short wintry day when I found the task allotted me substantially finished, and discovered myself to be in the vicinity of a place called Brewster's Mills, on the West Oneonta and Morris road.

I straightway made application to a man whom I found at the mill for supper and a night's lodging, which request he was kind enough to very promptly grant, and we accordingly repaired to the house close by.

I remember how welcome the supper and warm fire were to the wayfarer, and upon retiring, how soundly I slept that night ; but I regret to say, in the lapse of fifteen years since that occasion, I have forgotten my entertainer's name, which I would like to insert in this paper.



1875-1877

CHAPTER L.

LAST YEARS OF VILLAGE LIFE.

TOWARD THE CLOSE of the year 1875, I took an agency for several fire and life insurance companies, and represented these corporations in Oneonta for a period of something over a year.

I found this occupation satisfactory in a business sense ; before abandoning it having succeeded in securing a fairly profitable patronage. In connection with my new vocation I made, in the following spring, an extended trip through the central portion of the county.

On the 28th day of April, 1876, I participated as a member of the Hook and Ladder Company, in the first parade of Oneonta's new volunteer fire department.

The centennial national birthday being observed in our town, I recollect a noticeable feature of the public procession was the part taken by fourteen young ladies representing Columbia and the thirteen original states.

Early in the same month W. E. Yager and the writer started on a fishing and camping trip to the Beaver Kill. After an absence of one week we returned, on the fourteenth, to Oneonta. This was so long ago that I do not pretend to remember what success we had fishing in that famous trout stream. My friend and companion, however, may possibly recollect the extent of our catch.

The presidential campaign in the same year was a very exciting one. For a long time after election it was a matter of much uncertainty to many, whether Tilden or Hayes was to be the next President.

About the middle of February, 1877 I visited Washington, D. C. I returned to Oneonta shortly afterwards, and about April 28th following, went to New York.

In June I again returned to Oneonta, having already sold my insurance business to J. B. Camp.

I ceased to be a resident of my native town on the twenty-ninth of the last-mentioned month, and three days later started from New York on my way to California, my new home.



CHAPTER LI.

1877

THE YEARS 1872 AND 1873, following immediately after the erection of the first railroad machine shop in Oneonta, were memorable ones in the history of our town.

During that period a large number of new streets were opened up, and building operations were conducted on a scale so great, for a town of the size, that it was simply without precedent in all that section of the state, including at least four counties.

Among the more prominent thoroughfares added to the street system of Oneonta about that time, were the J. R. L. Walling and T. D. Watkins systems; Ford avenue by E. R. Ford, Esq.; Cherry and Green streets, by Solon Huntington; and West Broadway and Fonda avenue by Snow and Fonda.

There were several other well known streets opened up then, for which credit should be given to Messrs. Baker, Miller, Luther, Parish, Scramling and perhaps several others whose names I do not, at the moment of writing, recall.

This may also be termed the active beginning of Oneonta's brick period, as prior to then, the Bissell

and Saunders' block was the only business structure in town of that material.

The years 1873-1874 saw the commencement and completion of the Central Hotel, the McCrum and Saunders' block, the Rockwell and Stanton block and the Mrs. Bundy block—all built of brick.

The Episcopalians during this period finished their stone church and the village received its new schoolhouse on the "lower deck."

The last mentioned years also witnessed the organizing of the Agricultural Fair association and the building of a new railroad depot.

Toward the close of 1874 there were four weekly newspapers published in Oneonta—the *Herald and Democrat*, the *Commercial*, the *Liberal* and the *Dollar Newspaper*.

At about the same time, a few street signs made their appearance and the numbering of houses commenced in a scattering way. I think the first street lamp was also put up sometime within the aforesaid two years, oil or naphtha being the illuminating material. This lamp, I have in mind, was located in front of the residence of Meigs Case, M. D., on Dietz street.

In 1875, the Wyoming Conference of the Methodist Episcopal church was held in Oneonta and the same year witnessed a large addition to the Academy street schoolhouse.

Oneonta's present fire department was established in 1876 and in the same year Owen Phillips commenced work on his brick block adjoining the Stanton Opera House.


In the latter half of the period of 1871-1877, our town grew slowly, very slowly as compared with her progress of a few years before.

There was then much skepticism relative to her future prosperity and so will there be again.



CHAPTER LII.

AN ILLUSTRIOUS NAME.

 ONE AFTERNOON, late in the fall of the year, my attention was attracted to the name on a card that had just been handed in to an official of the Central Pacific Railroad Company as he sat in his office in San Francisco.

The gentleman who sent in the same, requested an interview and was duly admitted.

The visitor's name was not a common one in America, nor was it especially familiar to our generation ; but there was a day when it was like a magic talisman that nerved his followers to deeds of sublimest daring and impressed his enemies as symbolical of disaster to their country's cause.

As the stranger made his appearance and was introduced by an attache of the office, my curiosity, already aroused, was increased several fold on account of the striking resemblance he bore, especially in the outline of his nose and eagle-like keenness of eye, to the illustrious man of the same name, with whose picture my mind was familiar.

Could this foreigner be his kinsman ? I mentally inquired, and as the query took shape, the familiar surroundings of that office seemed to fade away.

* * * * *

It is a strange land. Before me is an island in a great river and across this little spot of ground is moving a mighty host, accoutered with all the panoply of war.

Somewhat back from the north bank of the river is another great army, on the defensive ; waiting for the mightiest military captain the modern world has ever known, to assume the aggressive. So formidable is this master of the art of war, that his opponents await his good pleasure as to when, where and how the opening blow of the impending struggle is to be delivered.

Behold ! under the partial protection of a great, united and simultaneous fire of artillery, the mighty column of foot, horse and artillery commences moving across the bridge, from the island to the north bank, where there are two little stone villages to be immediately taken ; while but a few miles away the house-tops and steeples of the capital city of an empire are thronged with excited people, breathlessly listening to catch the sounds of battle.

The villages are taken, are lost and retaken ; the infuriated foes in many instances struggling hand to hand for the possession of the narrow streets.

The river which has been rapidly rising now breaks asunder the bridge, cutting in twain the army of the invaders.

Now follows the second great disaster of the day, for Lannes is mortally hurt.

The Emperor in the meantime is calm, always calm in battle, and now in the face of impending destruction he seems no more, no less so. He has lost the commander of one wing; he will now lean a little more on the man who commands the other, while he puts into action the great mental resources which he always seemed to have in reserve.

The bridge must be repaired. Time is now everything. Can the surviving wing commander meanwhile hold his position in one of the ruined villages? A messenger is hurriedly dispatched to the scene, to ascertain. The orderly finds the great marshal, almost overcome with heat and exhaustion, seated among the smoking ruins of the town, and not far from the cemetery which has been the scene of the most sanguinary feature of the awful struggle.

This is the second burial place that has loomed up, ominously, in the pathway of his imperial master; it is the repetition of gloomy Eylau, without the drifting snow, to one who must have only victory, upon the same principle that while constant attrition may reduce the magnitude of a larger stone, the smaller one, with which it has been in contact is, in the mean time, entirely wasted away.

The orderly is told to inform the Emperor that the position will be held. It is held—the bridge is repaired and his soldiers withdraw to the island for yet a while.

The scene shifts, and a little later the second attempt to reach the north bank proves so successful that within a few hours from the commencement of the movement, one hundred and fifty thousand soldiers have crossed from the island, and are drawn up in battle array to a like number of opponents upon the plains of Wagram.

The man who stood like a rock, near the churchyard, against whom his foes in overwhelming numbers, like a mighty sea, surged and beat against in vain, commands a corps of Napoleon's army at Wagram, resting on the ends of the pontoon bridges leading back to the island. He is the sheet anchor of his sovereign's house upon this occasion, and the bridges are required no more.

* * * * *

The scene vanished as quickly as it came ; but I found that our aged visitor was indeed the son of Andre Massena, Marshal of France and Prince of Essling.

1888

CHAPTER LIII.

FAIRS—OLD AND NEW

TO ME, it is always a great pleasure to attend a Fair, be it in city or in country and I presume that this is the case with most of the people of the human race.

There is nothing in the line of public events so universally attractive to mankind and to their wives and children, as well. This is proven by its immemorial tenure in the hearts and customs of nearly all peoples.

At a Fair there is not only so much to appeal to the instincts of the business and speculative man, to the economy and thrift of the housewife, to the industry of the huckster and vender, to the palate of the epicure, to the greed of the sharper and the wiles of the gambler and trickster, to the delighted credulity of the ignorant and to the amusement lover of every phase, both old and young, but take it all in all it is the place of all others to see human nature open or disguised in all its conflicting lights, shades and colors.

The commercial elements and many of the public amusement features of a Fair of to-day remain much the same, when compared with those of ages and ages ago. It is the one institution created by man that has come down to us from antiquity practically unchanged.

Dynasties have come and gone; Empires have been built up and have crumbled away, but the Fair of the Egyptian, the Persian, the Greek, the Roman the Hindoo, the Mongolian and the ancient Russian has kept rolling merrily down the ages to the present time.

A few weeks ago while attending a certain Fair, I pictured in imagination a scene upon another occasion of similar character that occurred in the days of the Plantagenets. It was in 1305, and at St. Bartholomew's. The place was crowded with people when a feature was introduced that had hardly been looked for by the merry participants. Through one of the gateways of old London town appeared a small cavalcade headed by a Sheriff advancing across the open ground in front of the city walls and destined for a place called "The Elms." One man was not mounted, however, but was dragged across the common at the tails of horses instead. This was a rare and unexpected treat, so men, women and children deserted St. Bartholomew and hastened to the objective point of the procession

while the venders in the booths and stalls cried the merits of their wares for a time in vain.

Then followed the public butchery of Scotland's martyr chieftain, Wallace, and the crowd surged back to the now tame attractions of the Saint.

Although the Fair has not much changed since that barbarous day of our ancestors, the times are different, and it is well to be thankful that we attend this institution in a later and, I trust, better generation.



CHAPTER LIV.

1890

I LEFT ONEONTA IN THE YEAR 1877 to take up my residence on the Pacific coast, as before stated, but having visited my native town several times since becoming a Californian, I am fairly familiar with the several stages of her progress during the intervening period.

My impression is, the growth of Oneonta was slow during the period of 1877—1880. The last ten years, however, have constituted the golden era of her history and I find but little remaining, in the business quarter, to remind me of its appearance a decade and a half ago.

When I abandoned my old place of residence, there were but comparatively few brick business houses in town, but now the conditions are completely reversed, for the frame structures used for mercantile purposes at the present time are decidedly in the minority.

These great improvements in the architectural appearance of Main, Chestnut and Broad streets were somewhat hastened by the extensive fires of the last ten years, which almost obliterated the old frame rows on the two former thoroughfares.

The religious denominations have likewise kept step with the march of improvement, having caught the progressive spirit of the times. In the last few years the Presbyterians, Methodists and Freewill Baptists have built new churches of brick, making with the Roman Catholic, four sanctuaries of that material within the village limits. Besides these, Oneonta has received a fifth new church, erected by the Universalists while the Episcopalians and First Baptists retain their old church buildings, more or less remodeled or improved.

Among the prominent new industries, public institutions, improvements, etc., pertaining exclusively to more modern Oneonta, may be mentioned the State Normal School; table, chair, shirt and cigar factories; knitting mill; extensive additions to the railroad repair shops; water, gas and electric light works; phosphate works; State Armory; street car line; free mail delivery; daily newspapers; paved streets; new hotels; great solid, substantial rows of business houses and a large number of elegant residences.

The Normal School, East End and South Side suburbs are rapidly growing up, where but a few years ago, were pastures, meadows and waving fields of grain.

I left Oneonta an ambitious country village. I return to find it a vigorous town of over one hundred streets, with a city charter almost in sight.

CHAPTER LV.

SOUNDS THAT LINGER.

THE SOUNDS THAT REMAIN with us, for years after the agency by which they were produced has ceased to exist, are not so much the sounds that arouse within us pleasure or fear; but they belong, more exclusively, to the local environment of the dead, during the period of religious services immediately preceding burial.

Then does Death assert his mighty prerogative over the living with its most tremendous import and the solitary voice of a bird or the monotonous buzzing of the flies breaking in on the awful calmness of the place during one of the intervals pertaining to the last rites, makes an impression upon our minds, that remains when most else is forgotten.

I have sometimes thought that when Longfellow wrote:

“Forever — never! Never — forever!”

he not only drew his inspiration from an old clock on the stairs, but it ticked to him most eloquently in the midst of some funeral service—of a relative or a friend.

There is a cemetery, I have in mind, located on the bank of a brook.

By this brook, there is a planing mill, and all day long is heard the voice of the mill ; sometimes singing in a low, guttural tone and again sharp and loud.

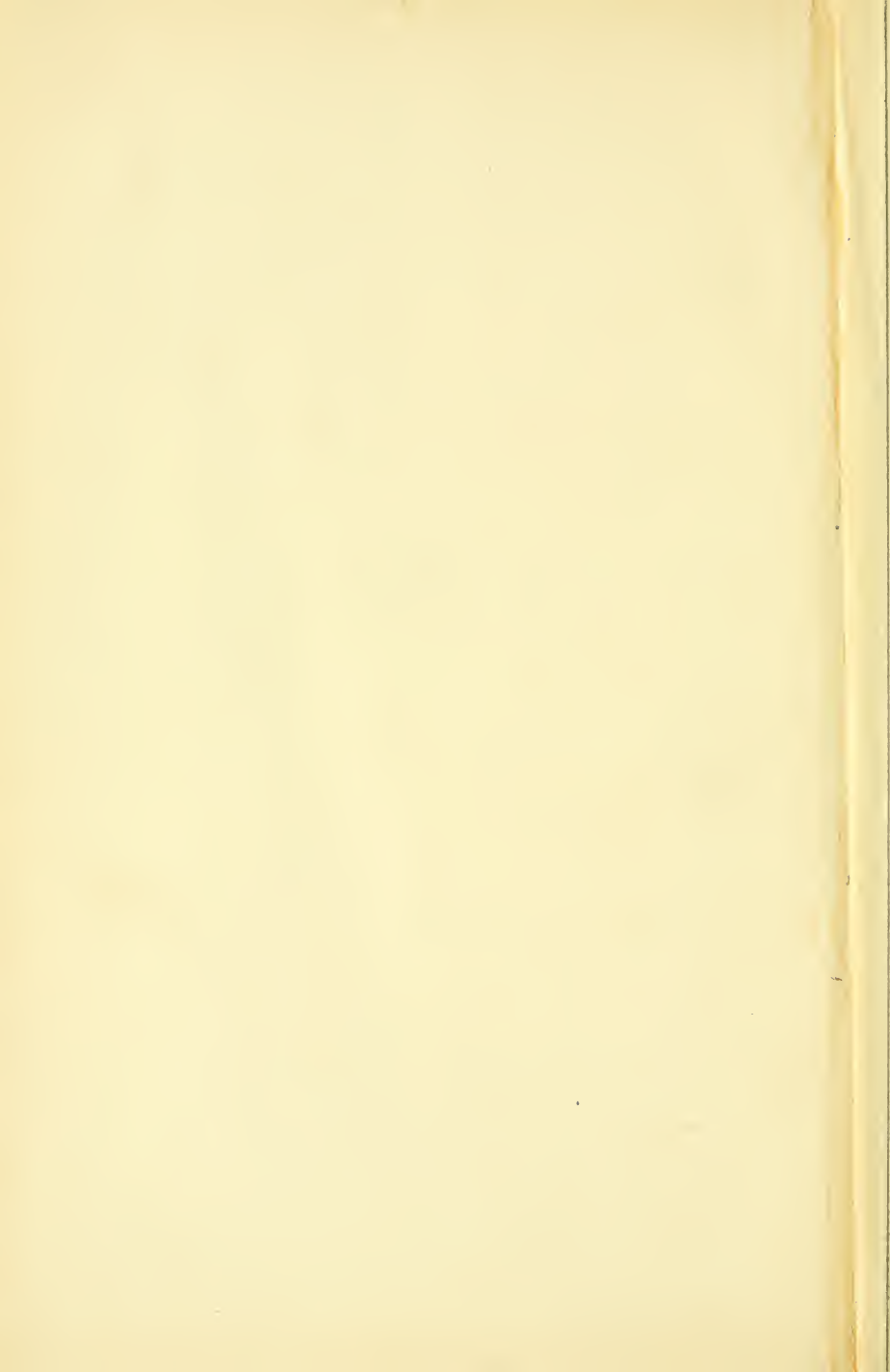
One day, while visiting the cemetery, I found the sexton just throwing up the last shovelfuls from a newly prepared grave.

I saw the funeral procession slowly approaching.

Presently the relatives and friends had surrounded the place that was, so soon, to receive the remains of their lost one, peacefully resting in the casket close beside it.

Then followed the religious services, usual in the burial of the dead, but upon their conclusion and in the midst of the awful stillness that prevailed, as the body was about to be consigned to earth, a shrill monotonous sound broke in upon the mourners. It came from the mill—a sound that had often been heard upon similar occasions and whose sad monotones will long linger in the memories of many.







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